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GEORGE ADAM SMITH'S  
WORKS ON THE PROPHETS

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

VOLUME II. CHAPTERS XL-LXVI

GEORGE ADAM SMITH'S  
WORKS ON THE PROPHETS

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THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH



# THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOLUME II

CHAPTERS XL-LXVI

BY

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TO  
MY WIFE





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## INTRODUCTION

THIS volume upon Isaiah xl-lxvi carries on the exposition of the Book of Isaiah from the point reached by the author's previous volume on Isaiah i-xxxix. But as it accepts these twenty-seven chapters, upon their own testimony, as a separate prophecy or prophecies from a century and a half later than Isaiah himself, in styles and on subjects not the same as his, and as it accordingly pursues a somewhat different method of exposition from the previous volume, a few words of introduction are again necessary.

The greater part of Isaiah i-xxxix was addressed to a nation upon their own soil,—with their temple, their king, their statesmen, their tribunals, and their markets,—responsible for the discharge of justice and social reform, for the conduct of foreign policies and the defence of the fatherland. But chaps. xl-lxvi, or the bulk of them, came to a people wholly in exile, and partly in servitude, with no civic life and few social responsibilities: a people in the passive state, with occasion for the exercise of almost no qualities save those of penitence and patience, of memory and hope. This difference between the two parts of the Book is summed up in their respective uses of the word *Righteousness*. In Isaiah i-xxxix, or at least in such of

these chapters as refer to Isaiah's own day, righteousness is man's moral and religious duty, in its contents of piety, purity, justice, and social service. In Isaiah xl-lxvi righteousness (except in a very few cases) is something which the people expect from God—their historical vindication by His reinstatement of them as His people.

It is, therefore, evident that what rendered Isaiah's own prophecies of so much meaning to the modern conscience—their treatment of those social questions which we have always with us—cannot form the chief interest of chapters xl-lxvi. But their place is taken by a series of historical and religious questions of supreme importance. Into the vacuum created in Israel's life by the Exile, there rushes the meaning of the nation's whole history—all the conscience of their past, all the destiny with which their future is charged. It is not with the fortunes and duties of a single generation that this great prophecy has to do: it is with a people in their entire significance and promise. The standpoint of the prophet may be the Exile, but his vision ranges from Abraham to Christ. Besides the business of the hour,—the deliverance of Israel from Babylon,—the prophet addresses himself to these questions: What is Israel? What is Israel's God? How is Yahweh different from other gods? How is Israel different from other peoples? He recalls the making of the nation, their God's treatment of them from the beginning, all that they and their God have been to each other and to the world, and especially the meaning of this latest judgement of Exile. But the instruction and the impetus of that marvellous past he uses in order to interpret and proclaim the still more glorious future,—the ideal, which God has set before His people, and in the realisation of which their

history shall culminate. It is here that the Spirit of God lifts the prophet to the highest station in prophecy—to the richest consciousness of spiritual religion—to the clearest vision of Christ.

Accordingly, to expound Isaiah xl–lxvi is really to write the religious history of Israel. A prophet whose vision includes both Abraham and Christ, whose subject is the whole meaning and promise of Israel, cannot be adequately interpreted within the limits of his own text or of his own time. Excursions are necessary both to the history behind him, and to the history still in front of him. This is the reason of the appearance in this volume of chapters whose titles seem at first beyond its scope—such as *From Isaiah to the Fall of Jerusalem: What Israel took into Exile: One God, One People: The Servant of the Lord in the New Testament*. Moreover, much of this historical matter has an interest that is only historical. If in Isaiah's own prophecies it is his generation's likeness to ourselves, which appeals to our conscience, in chaps. xl–lxvi of the Book called by his name it is Israel's unique meaning and office for God in the world, which we study. We are called to follow an experience and a discipline unshared by any other generation of men; and to interest ourselves in matters that then happened once for all, such as the victory of the One God over the idols, or His choice of a single people through whom to reveal Himself to the world. We are called to watch work, which that priestly people did for humanity, rather than, as in Isaiah's own prophecies, work which has to be repeated by each new generation in its turn, and to-day also by ourselves. This is why in an exposition of Isaiah xl–lxvi, like the present volume, there should be more of historical recital, and less of practical application, than in the exposition of Isaiah i–xxxix.

At the same time we must not suppose that there is not very much in Isaiah xl-lxvi with which to stir our own consciences and instruct our own lives. For, to mention no more, there is that sense of sin with which Israel entered exile, and which has made the literature of Israel's Exile the confessional of the world; there is that unexhausted programme of the Service of God and Man, which our prophet lays down as Israel's duty and example to humanity; and there is that prophecy of the virtue and glory of vicarious suffering for sin, which is the gospel of Christ and His Cross.

I have found it necessary to devote more space to critical questions than in the previous volume. Chaps. xl-lxv approach more nearly to a unity than chaps. i-xxxix: with very few exceptions they lie in chronological order. But they are not so clearly divided and grouped: their connection cannot be so briefly or lucidly explained. The form of the prophecy is dramatic, but the scenes and the speakers are not definitely marked off. In spite of the chronological advance, which we shall be able to trace, there are no clear stages—not even, as we shall see, at those points at which most expositors divide the prophecy, the end of chap. xlviii and of chap. lvii. The prophet pursues simultaneously several lines of thought; and though the close of some of these and the rise of others may be marked to a verse, his frequent passages from one to another are often almost imperceptible. He requires a more continuous translation, a more elaborate exegesis, than were necessary for Isaiah i-xxxix.

In order to effect some general arrangement of Isa. xl-lxvi it is necessary to keep in view that the immediate problem which the prophet had before him was twofold. It was political, and it was spiritual. There was, first, the deliverance of Israel from Babylon,



according to the ancient promises of their God: to this were attached such questions as His omnipotence, faithfulness, and grace; the meaning of Cyrus; the condition of the Babylonian Empire. But after their political deliverance from Babylon was assured, there remained the larger problem of Israel's spiritual readiness for the freedom and the destiny to which God was to lead them through the opened gates of their prison-house. To this were attached such questions as the original calling and mission of Israel; the mixed and paradoxical character of the people; their need of a Servant from the Lord, since they themselves had failed to be His Servant; the coming of this Servant, his methods and results.

This twofold division of the prophet's problem will not, it is true, strike his prophecy into separate and distinct groups of chapters. He who attempts such a division simply does not understand 'Second Isaiah.' But it will make clear the different currents of the sacred argument, which flow sometimes through and through one another, and sometimes singly and in succession; and it will give us a plan for grouping the twenty-seven chapters very nearly, if not quite, in the order in which they lie.

On these principles, the following exposition is divided into Four Books. The First is called **THE EXILE**: it contains an argument for placing the date of the prophecy soon after 550 B.C., and brings the history of Israel down to that date from the time of Isaiah; it states the political and spiritual sides of the double problem to which the prophecy is God's answer; it describes what Israel took with them into exile, and what they learned and suffered there, till, after half a century, the herald voices of our prophecy broke upon their waiting ears. The Second Book, **THE LORD'S**

DELIVERANCE, discusses the political redemption from Babylon, with the questions attached to it about God's nature and character, about Cyrus and Babylon, or all of chaps. xl-xlvi, except the passages about the Servant, which are easily detached from the rest, and refer rather to the spiritual side of Israel's great problem. The Third Book, THE SERVANT OF THE LORD, expounds all the passages on that subject, both in chaps. xl-xlvi and in chaps. xlix-lxiii, with the development of the subject in the New Testament, and its application to our life to-day. The Servant and his work are the solution of all the spiritual difficulties in the way of the people's Return and Restoration. To these latter and their practical details the rest of the prophecy is devoted ; that is, all chaps. xlix-lxvi, except the passages on the Servant, and these chapters are treated in the Fourth Book of this volume, THE RESTORATION.

As much as possible of the critical discussion has been put in Chapter I, or in the opening paragraphs of the other chapters, or in footnotes. A new translation has been provided. Where the rhythm of the original is at all discernible, the translation has been made in it. But it must be kept in mind that this reproduction of the original rhythm is only approximate, and that no claim is made to elegance ; its chief aim being to make clear the order and the emphases of the original. The translation is, as far as possible, literal.

Having felt the want of a clear account of the prophet's use of his great key-word Righteousness, I have inserted for students, at the end of Book II, a chapter on this term. Summaries of our prophet's use of such cardinal terms as *Mishpat*, *R'ishônôth*, *The Isles*, etc., will be found in notes. For want of space I have had to exclude some sections on the Style of

Isaiah, xl-lxvi, on the Influence of Monotheism on the Imagination, and on What Isaiah xl-lxvi owes to Jeremiah. This debt, as we shall be able to trace, is so great that 'Second Jeremiah' would be a title no less proper for the prophecy than 'Second Isaiah.'

I had also wished to append a chapter on Commentaries on the Book of Isaiah. No Scripture has been so nobly served by its commentaries. To begin with there was Calvin, and there is Calvin,—as valuable as ever for his strong spiritual power, his sanity, his moderation, his sensitiveness to the changes and shades of the prophet's meaning. After him Lowth, Vitringa, Gesenius, Hitzig, Ewald, Delitzsch ; all the great names of the past in Old Testament criticism, are connected with Isaiah. Subsequently (besides Nägelsbach in Lange's *Bibelwerk*) we had Cheyne's two volumes; Bredenkamp's clear and concise exposition, the characteristic of which is an attempt to distinguish authentic prophecies of Isaiah in the disputed chapters ; Orelli's handy volume from the conservative side, but accepting, as Delitzsch does in his last edition, the dual authorship ; and now, 1890, Dillmann's great work, replacing Knobel's in the ' *Kurzgefasstes Exegetisches Handbuch*' series. I regret that I did not receive Dillmann's work till more than half of this volume was written. English students will have all they can possibly need if they can add Dillmann to Delitzsch and Cheyne, though Calvin and Ewald must never be forgotten. Professor Driver's *Isaiah : His Life and Times* is a complete handbook to the prophet. On the theology, besides the relevant portions of Schultz's *Alt-Testamentliche Theologie* (4th ed., 1889), and Duhm's *Theologie der Propheten*, the student will find invaluable Professor Robertson Smith's *Prophets of Israel* for Isaiah i-xxxix, and Professor A. B. Davidson's papers in the *Expositor* for

1884 on the theology of Isaiah xl-lxvi. There are also Krüger's able and lucid *Essai sur la Théologie d'Isaïe xl-lxvi* (Paris, 1882), and Guthe's *Das Zukunftsbild Jesaias*, and Barth's and Giesebrecht's respective *Beiträge zur Jesaiakritik*.

In conclusion, I have to express my thanks for the very great assistance which I have derived in the composition of both volumes from my friend the Reverend Charles Anderson Scott, B.A.,<sup>1</sup> who has sought out facts, read nearly all the proofs, and helped to prepare the Index.

QUEEN'S CROSS CHURCH,  
ABERDEEN, October, 1890.

To the following new and revised edition I have to add of introduction just this.

As in the revision of the preceding volume on Isaiah i-xxxix, I have carefully made use of those commentaries on the Book of Isaiah, and other relevant works which have been published since 1890, and a list of which is now given in that volume. To all those works, whether adopting or questioning their conclusions, I give references either in the text or in the footnotes.

Some of the reviews of the first edition expressed the wish that I had given a complete translation of Isaiah xl-lxvi. I have now endeavoured to do this. In rendering the metrical form of these chapters I have not been able to accept all the alterations on the text and elisions from it, proposed by Duhm, Cheyne, and Budde, or accepted by Marti and Box, in order to secure a regularity of rhythm or metre ; but only such of them

<sup>1</sup> Now Professor in Westminster College, Cambridge, and D.D.

as are supported by the Septuagint or other versions, or as restore manifestly interrupted connections; because the metrical irregularities in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament are too frequent to be all explained as due to insertions by later scribes; and because I believe it to be uncritical to impose upon ancient poets modern standards of metrical regularity, especially when it is obvious that Hebrew singers were governed more by rhythm of meaning than by exact standards of rhythm of sound.

GEORGE ADAM SMITH.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN,

*June, 1927.*

## TABLE OF DATES

**B.C.**

- 721. Fall of Samaria. Captivity of Northern Israel.
- 701. Deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib.
- 692-641. Reign of Manasseh. Supposed time of Isaiah's death.
- c. 630. Josiah's Reformation begun.
- 629 or 628. Jeremiah called to be a prophet.
- 621. The Book of Deuteronomy discovered.
- 612 (?) or 607. Fall of Nineveh and Assyria. Babylon supreme.
- 604. First Year of Nebuchadrezzar.

### THE EXILE

- 599-598. Siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar. First Captivity of the Jews.
- 594. Ezekiel begins to prophesy in Chaldea.
- 587. Destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar. Second Captivity of the Jews.
- Flighi of many Jews with Jeremiah to Egypt.
- 585. Battle of the Eclipse. Triple League : Babylon, Media, Lydia.
- 561. Nebuchadrezzar dies. Evil-Merodach succeeds.
- 559. Neriglissar succeeds Evil-Merodach.
- 555. Nabunahid or Nabonidos usurps the throne of Babylon.
- Harder times for the Jews.
- 549. Fall of Median monarchy before Cyrus II, the Great.
- 546 or 545. Cyrus attacks Babylonia from the north, and is repulsed. Invades Lydia, and takes Sardis and King Cræsus.
- 538. Cyrus captures Babylon.
- Permission to the Jews to return and rebuild Jerusalem. Zerubabel, Joshua, or Jeshua.

- 
- 529. Cyrus dies. Cambyses sole king.
  - 522. Cambyses dies.
  - 521. Babylon revolts. Retaken by Darius.
  - 515. Completion of Second Temple.
  - 486. Xerxes succeeds Darius.
  - 464. Artaxerxes Longimanus.
  - 458. Second great return of Jews. Ezra.
  - 445. First Visit of Nehemiah to Jerusalem, and building of City Wall.
  - 433-432. Second Visit of Nehemiah.
  - 401. Revolt and defeat of Cyrus the Younger. The Anabasis.



BOOK I  
THE EXILE



## CHAPTER I

### THE DATE OF ISAIAH XL-LXVI

THE problem of the date of Isaiah xl-lxvi is this: In a book called by the name of the prophet Isaiah, who flourished between 740 and 700 B.C., the last twenty-seven chapters deal with the captivity suffered by the Jews in Babylonia from 598 to 538, and more particularly with the advent, about 550 onwards, of Cyrus, whom they name. Are we to take for granted that Isaiah himself prophetically wrote these chapters, or must we assign them to a nameless author or authors of the period of which they treat?

Till the end of last century it was the almost universally accepted tradition, and even still is an opinion retained by some, that Isaiah was carried forward by the Spirit, out of his own age to the standpoint of one hundred and fifty years later; that he was inspired to utter the warning and comfort required by a generation of Jews so very different from his own, and was even enabled to hail by name their redeemer, Cyrus. This theory, involving as it does a phenomenon without parallel in the history of Holy Scripture, is based on these two grounds: *first*, that the chapters in question form a considerable part—nearly nine-twentieths—of the ‘Book of Isaiah;’ and *second*, that portions of them are quoted in the New Testament by the prophet’s name. The theory is also supported by arguments

drawn from resemblances of style and vocabulary between these twenty-seven chapters and the undisputed oracles of Isaiah ; but, as the opponents of the Isaian authorship also appeal to vocabulary and style, it will be better to leave this kind of evidence aside for the present, and to discuss the problem upon other and less ambiguous grounds.

The first argument, then, for the Isaian authorship of chaps. xl-lxvi is that they form part of a book called by Isaiah's name. But, to be worth anything, this argument must rest on the following premises : that everything in a book called by a prophet's name is necessarily by that prophet, and that the compilers of the book intended to hand it down as altogether from his pen. Now there is no evidence for either of these premises. On the contrary, there is considerable testimony in the opposite direction. The Book of Isaiah is not one continuous prophecy. It consists of a number of separate orations, with a few intervening pieces of narrative. Some of these orations claim to be Isaiah's own : they possess such titles as *The vision of Isaiah the son of Amos*.<sup>1</sup> But such titles describe only the individual prophecies they head, and other portions of the book, upon other subjects and in very different styles, do not possess titles at all. It seems to me, that those, who maintain the Isaian authorship of the whole book, have the responsibility cast upon them of explaining why some chapters in it should be distinctly said to be by Isaiah, while others should not be so entitled. Surely this difference affords us suffi-

<sup>1</sup> Chs. i, ii, etc. The only title that could be offered as covering the whole book is that in ch. i, ver. 1 : *The vision of Isaiah the son of Amos, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah*. But this manifestly cannot apply to any but the earlier chapters, of which Judah and Jerusalem during those reigns are indeed the subjects.

cient ground for understanding that the whole book is not necessarily by Isaiah, nor intentionally handed down by its compilers as the work of that prophet.<sup>1</sup>

Now, when we come to chaps. xl-lxvi, we find that, occurring in a book which we have just seen no reason for supposing to be in every part of it by Isaiah, these chapters nowhere claim to be his. They are separated from that portion of the book, in which his undisputed oracles are placed, by a historical narrative of considerable length. And there is not anywhere upon them or in them a title or other statement that they are by the prophet, or any allusion which could give the faintest support to the opinion, that they offer themselves to posterity as dating from his time. It is safe to say, that, if they had come to us by themselves, no one would have dreamt for an instant of ascribing them to Isaiah; for the alleged resemblances, which their language and style bear to his language and style, are far more than overborne by the undoubted differences, and have never been employed, even by the defenders of the Isaian authorship, except in additional and confessedly slight support of their main argument, *viz.*, that the chapters must be Isaiah's because they are included in a book called by his name.

Let us understand, therefore, at this very outset, that in discussing the question of the authorship of 'Second Isaiah,' we are not discussing a question upon which the text itself makes any statement, or into which the credibility of the text enters. No claim is made by

<sup>1</sup> There are, it will be remembered, certain narratives in the Book of Isaiah which are not by the prophet. They speak of him in the third person (chs. vii, xxxvi-xxxix), while in other narratives (chs. vi and viii) he speaks of himself in the first person. Their presence is sufficient proof that the Book of Isaiah, in its extant shape, did not come from Isaiah's hands, but was compiled by others.

the Book of Isaiah itself for the Isaian authorship of chaps. xl-lxvi.

A second fact in Scripture, which seems at first sight to make strongly for the unity of the Book of Isaiah, is that in the New Testament, portions of the disputed chapters are quoted by Isaiah's name, just as are portions of his admitted prophecies. These citations are nine in number.<sup>1</sup> None is by our Lord Himself. They occur in the Gospels, Acts, and Paul. Now if any of these quotations were given in answer to the question, Did Isaiah write chaps. xl-lxvi of the book called by his name? or if the use of his name along with them were involved in the arguments which they are borrowed to illustrate (as, for instance, is the case with David's name in the quotation made by our Lord from Psalm cx), then those who deny the unity of the Book of Isaiah would be face to face with a very serious problem indeed. But in none of the nine cases is the authorship of the Book of Isaiah in question. In none of the nine cases is there anything in the argument, for the purpose of which the quotation has been made, that depends on the quoted words being by Isaiah. For the purposes, for which the Evangelists and Paul borrow the texts, these might as well be unnamed, or attributed to any other canonical writer. Nothing in them requires us to suppose that Isaiah's name is mentioned with them for any other end than that of reference, *viz.*, to point out that they lie in the part of prophecy usually known by his name. But, if there is nothing in these citations to prove that Isaiah's name is being used for any other purpose than that of reference, then it is plain—and this is all that we ask assent to at the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iii. 3, viii. 17, xii. 17; Luke iii. 4, iv. 17; John i. 23, xii. 38; Acts viii. 28; Rom. x. 16-20.

present time—that they do not offer the authority of Scripture as a bar to our examining the evidence of the chapters in question.

It is hardly necessary to add that neither is there any other question of doctrine in our way. There is none about the nature of prophecy, for, to take an example, chap. liii, as a prophecy of Jesus Christ, is surely as great a marvel if you date it from the Exile as if you date it from the age of Isaiah. And, in particular, let us understand that no question need be started about the ability of God's Spirit to inspire a prophet to mention Cyrus by name one hundred and fifty years before Cyrus appeared. The question is not, *Could* a prophet have been so inspired?—to which question, were it put, our answer might only be, God is great!—but the question is, *Was* our prophet so inspired? does he himself offer evidence of the fact? Or, on the contrary, in naming Cyrus does he give himself out as a contemporary of Cyrus, who already saw the great Persian above the horizon? To this question only the writings under discussion can give us an answer. Let us see what they have to say.

Apart from the question of the date, no chapters in the Bible are interpreted with such complete unanimity as Isa. xl-xlvi. They plainly set forth certain things as having already taken place—the Exile and Captivity, the ruin of Jerusalem, and the devastation of the Holy Land. Israel is addressed as having exhausted the time of her penalty, and is proclaimed to be ready for deliverance. Some of the people are comforted as being in despair because redemption does not draw near; others are exhorted to leave the city of their bondage, as if they were growing too familiar with its idolatrous life. Cyrus is named as their deliverer, and is pointed out as already called upon his career, and as



blessed with success by Yahweh, God of Israel. It is also promised that he will immediately add Babylon to his conquests, and so set God's people free.

Now all this is not predicted, as if from the standpoint of a previous century. It is nowhere said—as we should expect it to be said, if the prophecy had been uttered by Isaiah—that Assyria, the dominant world-power of Isaiah's day, was to disappear and Babylon to take her place; that then the Babylonians should lead the Jews into an exile which they had escaped at the hands of Assyria; and that after nearly seventy years of suffering God would raise up Cyrus as a deliverer. There is none of this prediction, which we might fairly have expected had the prophecy been Isaiah's; because, however far Isaiah carries us into the future, he never fails to start from the circumstances of his own day. Still more significant, however—there is not even the kind of prediction that we find in Jeremiah's prophecies of the Exile, with which indeed it is most instructive to compare Isa. xl-lxvi. Jeremiah also spoke of exile and deliverance, but it was always with the grammar of the future. He fairly and openly predicted both; and, let us especially remember, he did so with a meagreness of description, a reserve and reticence about details, which are simply unintelligible if Isa. xl-lxvi was written before his day, and by so well-known a prophet as Isaiah. No: in the statements, which our chapters make concerning the Exile and the condition of Israel under it, there is no prediction, not the slightest trace of that grammar of the future in which Jeremiah's prophecies are constantly uttered. But there is a direct appeal to the conscience of a people already long under the discipline of God; their circumstance of exile is taken for granted; there is a most vivid and delicate appreciation of their

present fears and doubts, and to these the deliverer Cyrus is not only named, but introduced as an actual and notorious personage already upon the midway of his irresistible career.

These facts are more broadly based than just at first sight appears. You cannot turn their flank by the argument that Hebrew prophets were in the habit of employing in their predictions what is called 'the prophetic perfect'—that is, that in the ardour of their conviction that certain things would take place they talked of these, as the flexibility of the Hebrew tenses allowed them to do, in the past or perfect as if the things had actually taken place. No such argument is possible in the case of the introduction of Cyrus. For it is not only that the prophecy, with what might be the mere ardour of vision, represents the Persian as already above the horizon and upon the flowing tide of victory; but that, in the course of a sober argument for the unique divinity of the God of Israel, which takes place throughout chaps. xli–xlvi, Cyrus, alive and irresistible, already accredited by success, and with Babylonia at his feet, is pointed out as the unmistakable proof that *former* prophecies of a deliverance for Israel are at last coming to pass. Cyrus, in short, is not presented as a prediction, but as the proof that a prediction is being fulfilled. Unless he had already appeared in flesh and blood, and was on the point of striking at Babylon, with all the prestige of unbroken victory, a great part of Isa. xli–xlvi would be utterly unintelligible.

This argument is so conclusive for the date of Second Isaiah, that it may be well to state it a little more in detail, even at the risk of anticipating some of the exposition of the text.

Among the Jews at the close of the Exile there

appear to have been two classes. One class was hopeless of deliverance, and to their hearts is addressed such a prophecy as chap. xl: *Comfort ye, comfort ye My people*. But there was another class, of opposite temperament, who had only too strong opinions on the subject of deliverance. In bondage to the letter of Scripture and to the great precedents of their history, these Jews appear to have insisted that the Deliverer to come must be a Jew, and a descendant of David. And the bent of much of the prophet's urgency in chap. xlv is to persuade those pedants, that the Gentile Cyrus, who had appeared to be not only the biggest man of his age, but the very likely means of Israel's redemption, was of their own God's creation and calling. Does not such an argument necessarily imply that Cyrus was already present, an object of doubt and debate to earnest minds in Israel? Or are we to suppose that all this doubt and debate were foreseen, rehearsed, and answered one hundred and fifty years before the time by so famous a prophet as Isaiah, and that, in spite of his prediction and answer, the doubt and debate nevertheless took place in the minds of the very Israelites, who were most earnest students of ancient prophecy? The thing has only to be stated to be felt to be impossible.

But besides the pedants in Israel, there is apparent through these prophecies another body of men, against whom also Yahweh claims the actual Cyrus for His own. They are the priests and worshippers of the heathen idols. It is well known that the advent of Cyrus cast the Gentile religions of the time and their counsellors into confusion. The wisest priests were perplexed; the oracles of Greece and Asia Minor either were dumb when consulted about the Persian, or gave more than usually ambiguous answers. Over against

this perplexity of the heathen religions, our prophet confidently claims Cyrus for Yahweh's own. In a debate in chap. xli, in which he seeks to establish Yahweh's righteousness—that is, His faithfulness to His word, and power to carry out His predictions—the prophet speaks of ancient prophecies which have come from Yahweh, and points to Cyrus as their fulfilment. It does not matter to us in the meantime what those prophecies were. They may have been certain of Jeremiah's predictions; we may be sure that they cannot have contained anything so definite as Cyrus' name, or such a proof of Divine foresight must certainly have formed part of the prophet's plea. It is enough that they could be quoted; our business is rather with the evidence which the prophet offers of their fulfilment. That evidence is Cyrus. Would it have been possible to refer the heathen to Cyrus as proof that those ancient prophecies were being fulfilled, unless Cyrus had been visible to the heathen,—unless the heathen had been beginning already to feel this Persian *from the sunrise* in all his weight of war? It is no esoteric doctrine which the prophet is unfolding to initiated Israelites about Cyrus. He is making an appeal to men of the world to face facts. Could he possibly have made such an appeal unless the facts had been *there*, unless Cyrus had been within the ken of 'the natural man'?

If this evidence for the exilic date of Isa. xl-xlviii—for all these chapters hang together—required any additional support, it would be found in the fact that the prophet does not wholly treat of what is past and over, but makes some predictions as well. Cyrus is on the way of triumph, but Babylon has still to fall by his hand. Babylon has still to fall, before the exiles can go free. Now, if our prophet were predicting from

the standpoint of one hundred and forty years before, why did he make this sharp distinction between two events which appeared so closely together? If he had both the advent of Cyrus and the fall of Babylon in his long perspective, why did he not use 'the prophetic perfect' for both? That he speaks of the first as past and of the second as still to come, would most surely, if there had been no tradition the other way, have been accepted by all as sufficient evidence, that the advent of Cyrus was behind him and the fall of Babylon still in front of him, when he wrote these chapters.

Thus the earlier part, at least, of Isa. xl-lxvi—that is, chaps. xl-xlvi—compels us to date it between 555, Cyrus' advent, and 538, Babylon's fall. But some think that we may still further narrow the limits. In chap. xli. 25, Cyrus, whose own kingdom lay east of Babylonia, is described as invading Babylonia from the north. This, it has been thought, must refer to his union with the Medes in 549, and his threatened descent upon Mesopotamia from their quarter of the prophet's horizon.<sup>1</sup> If that be so, the possible years of our prophecy are reduced to eleven, 549–538. They may be reduced still further, if we take as their upper limit 546 or 545, when Cyrus conquered Lydia; and in support of this point to the allusions to *the coastlands* and *ends of the earth*, as, for example, in xli. 5.<sup>2</sup> But even if we take the wider limit, 555–538, we may well say that there are very few chapters in the whole of the Old Testament whose date can be fixed so precisely as the date of chaps. xl-xlvi.

If what has been unfolded in the preceding paragraphs is recognised as the statement of the chapters

<sup>1</sup> Driver's *Isaiah*, pp. 137, 139.

<sup>2</sup> Budde, *Geschichte der althebräischen Litteratur*, p. 159; followed by Box, p. 179.



themselves, it will be felt that further evidence of an exilic date is scarcely needed. And those, who are acquainted with the controversy upon the evidence furnished by the style and language of the prophecies, will admit how far short in decisiveness it falls of the arguments offered above. But we may fairly ask whether there is anything opposed to the conclusion we have reached, either, *first*, in the local colour of the prophecies; or, *second*, in their language; or, *third*, in their thought—anything which shows that they are more likely to have been Isaiah's than of exilic origin.

1. It has often been urged against the exilic date of these prophecies, that they wear so very little local colour, and one of the greatest of critics, Ewald, has felt himself, therefore, permitted to place their home, not in Babylonia, but in Egypt,<sup>1</sup> while he maintains the exilic date. But, as we shall see in surveying the condition of the exiles, it was natural for the best among them, their psalmists and prophets, to have no eyes for the colours of Babylon. They lived inwardly, they were much more the inhabitants of their own broken hearts than of that gorgeous foreign land; when their thoughts rose out of themselves it was to seek immediately their far-away Sion. How little local colour is there in the writings of Ezekiel beyond the Vision which opens his Book! Isa. xl-lxvi has even more to show; for indeed the absence of local colour from our prophecy has been greatly exaggerated. We shall find as we follow the exposition, break after break of Babylonian light and shadow falling across our path,

<sup>1</sup> So too Bunsen, while Duhm supposes the main author of xl-lv to have written in Phœnicia, by Lebanon. But, as Skinner says (*Isaiah xl-lxvi*, p. 1), the arguments for Egypt rest on no solid ground, and those for Phœnicia are unconvincing. On different theories of the location of the writer or writers of xlix-lxvi, see below

—the temples, the idol-manufactories, the processions of images, the diviners and astrologers, the gods and altars especially cultivated by the characteristic mercantile spirit of the place ; the shipping of that mart of nations, the crowds of her merchants ; the glitter of many waters, and even that intolerable glare, which so frequently curses the skies of Mesopotamia (xliv. 10).<sup>1</sup> The prophet speaks of the hills of his native land with just the same longing, that Ezekiel and a probable psalmist of the Exile<sup>2</sup> betray,—the homesickness of a highland-born man whose prison is on a flat, monotonous plain. The beasts he mentions have for the most part been recognised as familiar in Babylonia ; and while the same cannot be said of the trees and plants he names, it has been observed that the passages, into which he brings them, are passages where his thoughts are fixed on the restoration to Palestine.<sup>3</sup> Besides these, there are many delicate symptoms of the presence, before the prophet, of a people in a foreign land, engaged in commerce, but without political responsibilities, each of which, taken by itself, may be insufficient to convince, but the reiterated expression of which has even betrayed commentators, who lived too early for the theory of a second Isaiah, into the involuntary admission of an exilic authorship. It will perhaps startle some to hear John Calvin quoted on behalf of the exilic date of these prophecies. But let us read and consider this statement of his : ‘ Some regard must be had to the time when this prophecy was uttered ; for since the rank of the kingdom had been obliterated, and the name of the royal family had become mean and contemptible, during the captivity in Babylon, it might seem as if through the ruin of that

<sup>1</sup> But see Cheyne, *Introd.*, p. 274.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm cxxi.

<sup>3</sup> Driver's *Isaiah : His Life and Times*, p. 191.



family the truth of God had fallen into decay ; and therefore he bids them contemplate by faith the throne of David, which had been cast down.' <sup>1</sup>

2. What we have seen to be true of the local colour of our prophecy, holds good also of its style and language. There is nothing in either of these to commit us to an Isaian authorship, or to make an exilic date improbable ; on the contrary, the language and style, while containing no stronger nor more frequent resemblances to the language and style of Isaiah than may be accounted for by the natural influence of so great a prophet upon his successors, are signalised by differences from his undisputed oracles, too constant, too subtle, and sometimes too sharp, to make it at all probable that the whole book came from the same man. On this point it is enough to refer our readers to the exhaustive and very able reviews of the evidence by Canon Cheyne in the second volume of his *Commentary*, and in his *Introduction*,<sup>2</sup> and by Canon Driver in the last chapter of *Isaiah : His Life and Times*, and to quote the following words of so great an authority as Professor A. B. Davidson. After remarking on the difference in vocabulary of the two parts of the Book of Isaiah, he adds that it is not so much words in themselves as the peculiar uses and combinations of them, and especially ' the peculiar articulation of sentences and the movement of the whole discourse, by which an impression is produced so unlike the impression produced by the earlier parts of the book.' <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Calvin on Isa. lv. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 247-271, which conclude : ' If there is such a thing as the history of the Hebrew language, the last twenty-seven chapters of the Book are not the work of the historical Isaiah, but of a much later writer or school of writers.' See also Skinner's analysis, *Isaiah xl-lxvi*, pp. xlv-1 (Cambr. Bible for Schools), 1898.

<sup>3</sup> So quoted by Driver (*Isaiah*, etc., p. 200), from the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, 1879, p. 339.

3. It is the same with the thought and doctrine of our prophecy. In this there is nothing to make the Isaian authorship probable, or an exilic date impossible. But, on the contrary, whether we regard the needs of the people or the analogies of the development of their religion, we find that, while everything suits the Exile, nearly everything is foreign both to the subjects and to the methods of Isaiah. We shall observe the items of this as we go along, but one of them may be mentioned here (it will afterwards require a chapter to itself), our prophet's use of the terms *righteous* and *righteousness*. No one, who has carefully studied the meaning which these terms bear in the authentic oracles of Isaiah, and the use to which they are put in the prophecies under discussion, can fail to find in the difference a striking corroboration of our argument—that the latter were composed by a different mind than Isaiah's, speaking to a different generation.<sup>1</sup>

To sum up this argument. We have seen that there is no evidence in the Book of Isaiah to prove that it was all by himself, but much testimony which points to a plurality of authors; that chaps. xl–lxvi nowhere assert themselves to be by Isaiah; and that there is no other well-grounded claim of Scripture or of doctrine on behalf of his authorship. We have then shown that chaps. xl–xlviii do not only present the Exile as if nearly finished and Cyrus as if already come, while the fall of Babylon is still future; but that it is essential to one of their main arguments that Cyrus should be standing before Israel and the world, as a successful warrior, on his way to attack Babylon. That led us to date these chapters between 555 and 538. Turning

<sup>1</sup> See below chap. xiv.

then to other evidence,—the local colour they show, their language and style, and their theology,—we have found nothing which conflicts with that date, but, on the contrary, a very great deal, which much more agrees with it than with the date, or with the authorship, of Isaiah.

The anonymity of the prophecy—the absence from it of any title or author's name—is very explicable by his circumstances, if he wrote, as is most probable, in Babylonia and under the authorities in Babylon, whom he threatened with overthrow.<sup>1</sup>

It will be observed, however, that the question of authorship has been limited to the earlier chapters of the twenty-seven under discussion, *viz.*, to xl–xlviii. Does the same conclusion hold good of xlix–lxvi? This can be properly discovered only as we closely follow their exposition; it is enough in the meantime to have got firm footing on the Exile. We can feel our way bit by bit from this standpoint onwards. Let us now merely anticipate the main features of the rest of the prophecy.

A new section has been marked by many as beginning with chap. xlix. This is because chap. xlviii concludes with a refrain: *There is no peace, saith Yahweh, to the wicked*, which occurs again at the end of chap. lvii, and because with chap. xlviii Babylon and Cyrus drop out of sight. But the circumstances are still those of exile, and, as Professor Davidson remarks, chap. xlix is parallel in thought to chap. xlii, and also takes for granted the restoration of Israel in chap. xlviii, proceeding naturally from that to the statement of Israel's world-mission. In chaps. l–lv the situation is still that of the Exile, and, indeed, it is in commenting on a

<sup>1</sup> Budde, *Geschichte*, etc., p. 160.

verse of these chapters, lv. 3, that Calvin makes the implication of exilic origin which has been quoted above. But the end of the Exile and the return of Israel to Sion feel nearer than in xl–xlviii; l–lv may therefore have been written a few years later than xl–xlviii, perhaps on the very eve of Cyrus' entry into Babylon. Neither in their language nor in their ideas are there grounds for ascribing them to another than the author of xl–xlviii, as some, but not the most, of recent critics have attempted to prove.<sup>1</sup>

The unity of chs. xl–lv has been more seriously threatened by questions about the separableness of the passages on the Servant of Yahweh, which at intervals appear in them, and about the authorship of these. In 1875 Professor Duhm, and in 1886 Professor Briggs, independently and on somewhat different grounds, argued that these passages were parts of an older poem (Duhm thought on the life of Jeremiah), which the exilic author of the rest of xl–lv borrowed for insertion in his own work<sup>2</sup>; but in 1892 Duhm brought four of them—approximately xlii. 1–4, xlix. 1–6, l. 4–9, and lii. 13–liii. 12—down to a post-exilic date, 500–450 B.C., and attributed their insertion in chaps. xl–lv to the haphazard work of a late editor.<sup>3</sup> In 1894 Wellhausen<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kusters, *Theol. Tijdschrift*, 1896, 588 ff., assigned xlix–lv to a writer in Palestine not the author of xl–xlviii; but Cheyne assigns them to a writer of the School of Second Isaiah writing, in Babylonia, yet with an eye to the circumstances of Judæa, whose object was to 'encourage such workers in Jerusalem as Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi' (*Enc. Bibl.*, 2204 f.). See also his *Isaiah* in the Polychrome Bible, p. 209, and parallel passage in *S.B.O.T.* (Heb. 1899), p. 126. I see no grounds in xlix–lv for so late a date. Marti (*Jesaja*, 1900, p. xv) takes xl–lv, save for a few insertions, as definitely from one hand. So, too, Budde, *Geschichte der althebr. Litt.*, 1906, p. 164; G. B. Gray, *Crit. Introd. to O.T.*, 1913, 104 ff., and others. See also my own article 'Isaiah' in Hastings' *D.B.*, ii. 494 (1899).

<sup>2</sup> Duhm, *Theologie der Propheten*; Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy*.

<sup>3</sup> Duhm, *Jesaja*, pp. xiii, etc.

<sup>4</sup> *Geschichte*, p. 117, note.

took the Servant-passages as neither earlier nor later than the end of the Exile, and adopted by the writer of the rest of chaps. xl-lv as 'Themata zu seinen Predigten.' In 1895 Cheyne expressed a similar view that all the passages are independent of their present context 'but have exercised such an influence on the following sections that they cannot well have been inserted by any but by Second Isaiah himself'; and with this view Professor Skinner, in 1898, substantially agreed.<sup>1</sup> That year, however, Canon Cheyne brought down lii. 13-liii to the age of Ezra as 'a more defensible date,' and later brought down the other Servant-passages as well, regarding the Servant in these as 'an imaginative fusion of all the teachers of the Jewish religion in and after the time of Ezra,' and in lii. 13-liii as 'a similar fusion of the different nameless martyrs of Israel into a colossal figure identified with the people of Israel.'<sup>2</sup> In 1899 Smend, while clear that the Servant-passages were from another hand than the rest of xl-lv, chiefly on the ground that they ignore the sins of Israel, adhered to Duhm's earlier opinion that they were older than that rest.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, O. C. Whitehouse, denying the post-exilian character of the Servant-poems, assigns them to a writer between 565 and 550 B.C., before the rise of Cyrus and, therefore, a little earlier than the author of the rest of chaps. xl-lv, who wove the poems into his own prophecies. To this A. R. Gordon conditionally assents; while G. H. Box limits himself to the opinion that it is 'highly probable' that the poems, easily separable from their context,

<sup>1</sup> Cheyne, *Introd.*, 307-309; Skinner, *Is.* xl-lxvi, p. lv.

<sup>2</sup> Cheyne, *Jewish Rel. Life after the Exile*, 1898, p. 85; *Isaiah*, in the Polychrome Bible Heb. text, 1899, p. 127.

<sup>3</sup> Smend, *A.T. Rel. Gesch.*,<sup>2</sup> pp. 344, 352 ff.



were inserted after chaps. xlix-lv had been added to xl-xlvi.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, the unity of chaps. xl-lv (save for some casual insertions) has been accepted or maintained by Davidson, Driver, Marti, Budde, Cornill, J. E. McFadyen, E. A. Edghill, A. Westphal, and G. B. Gray, of whom Budde, Cornill, and Marti most explicitly and to my mind successfully reject the theories both of the separate authorship and of the post-exilic date of the Servant-poems.<sup>2</sup>

On chap. lv a number of short prophecies follow to the end of chap. lix. These, as we shall see, make it more than difficult to assign them to the same author and time as chaps. xl-lv. Some apparently lie in circumstance of exile, but others seem to be of a different date and place. The scenery they reflect is possibly that of Palestine, and they impute to the Jews habits which imply at least a measure of political independence. We shall have to consider whether such passages are echoes of times before the Great Exile, or, as some recent criticism concludes, post-exilic.

Chap. lvii, the eighteenth of our twenty-seven chapters, closes with the same refrain as chap. xlvi, the

<sup>1</sup> Whitehouse, *Isaiah*, vol. ii, 20 ff., in the *Century Bible*; Gordon, *The Prophets of the O.T.* (1916), 256; Box, *The Book of Isaiah* (1908), 176.

<sup>2</sup> Davidson, *Expositor*, 1883-1884 (cf. his posthumous *O.T. Prophecy*, 408 ff.); Driver, *Isaiah*, 2nd ed. (1893), *Introd. to the Lit. of the O.T.*, 6th ed. (1897); Budde, *Die sogenannten Ebed-Jahwe Lieder* (1900), *Gesch. der althebr. Litteratur* (1906), 165 f., and in Kautzsch's *Die Heilige Schrift des A.T.*, 3rd ed. (1909), i, 612, where he says that Duhm's theories 'poke out the eyes of the Second Isaiah'; Marti, *Jesaja* (1900), xv, 360 f.; Cornill in the *Theol. Rundschau*, iii (1900), 409 ff., and *Introd. to the Canonical Bks. of the O.T.* (1907), 290; McFadyen, *Introd. to O.T.* (1905), 134 f.; Edghill, *Evidential Value of Prophecy* (1906), 292 ff.; Westphal, *The Law and the Prophets* (1910), 333 ff.; Gray, *Crit. Introd. to O.T.* (1913), 104. See also my article, 'Isaiah' in *Hastings' D.B.* (1899).

ninth of the series : *There is no peace, saith Yahweh, to the wicked.* Chap. lviii has, therefore, been regarded as beginning the third great division of the prophecy. But here again, while there is certainly an advance in the treatment of the subject, and the prophet talks less of the redemption of the Jews and more of the glory of the restoration of Sion, the point of transition is very difficult to mark. Some critics<sup>1</sup> regard chap. lviii as post-exilic ; but when we come to it we may find a reason for supposing it to belong, just as much as Ezekiel, to the Exile. Chap. lix is perhaps the most difficult portion of all, because it makes the Jews responsible for civic justice in a way they could hardly be conceived to be in exile, and yet speaks, in the language of other portions of 'Second Isaiah,' of a deliverance that cannot well be other than the deliverance from exile. It is possible that this chapter is the fusion of two distinct addresses, with the conclusion that it is Israel's earlier conscience which we catch here, following her into the days of exile, and reciting her former guilt just before pardon is assured. Chaps. lx, lxi, and lxii are certainly exilic. The inimitable prophecy, chap. lxiii. 1-6, complete within itself, and unique in its beauty, is either a promise given just before the deliverance from a long captivity of Israel under heathen nations (ver. 4), or an exultant song of triumph after such a deliverance has taken place. Chap. lxiii. 7-lxiv implies a ruined temple (ver. 10), but bears no traces of the writer being in exile. It has been assigned to the period of the first attempts to rebuild Jerusalem after the Return. Chap. lxxv has been assigned to the same date, and its local colour interpreted as that of Palestine. But the colour

<sup>1</sup> Including Professor Cheyne, *Encyc. Brit.*, 'Isaiah,' and others.



is just as possibly that of Babylon. Chap. lxvi, however, betrays more evidence of being written after the Return. It divides into two parts. In verses 1 to 4 the temple is still unbuilt, but the building would seem to be already begun. In verses 5 to 24, the arrival of the Jews in Palestine, the resumption of the life of the sacred community, and the disappointments of the returned at the first meagre results, seem to be implied. And the music of the book dies out in tones of warning, that sin still hinders the Lord's work with His people.

This rapid survey has made two things sufficiently clear. *First*, that while the bulk of chaps. xl-lxvi was composed in Babylonia during the Exile of the Jews, there are considerable portions which betray a Palestinian origin; and one or two smaller pieces that seem to take for granted the Return from the Exile. But, *secondly*, all these pieces, which it appears necessary to assign to different epochs and authors, have been arranged so as to exhibit a certain order and progress—an order, more or less observed, of date, and a progress very apparent (as we shall see in the course of exposition) of thought and of clearness in definition. The largest portion, of whose unity we are assured and whose date we can fix, is found at the beginning. Chaps. xl-lv are certainly by one hand, and may be dated, as we have seen, between 555 and 538—the period of Cyrus' approach to take Babylon. There the interest in Cyrus ceases, and the thought of the redemption from Babylon is mainly replaced by that of the subsequent Return. Along with these lines, we shall discover a development in the prophecy's great doctrine of the Servant of Yahweh. But even this dies away, as if the experience of suffering and discipline were being replaced by that of return and restoration;

and it is Sion in her glory, and the spiritual mission of the people, and the vengeance of the Lord, and the building of the temple, and a number of practical details in the life and worship of the restored community, which fill up the remainder of the book, along with a few passages which may be echoes from pre-exilic times. Can we escape feeling in all this a definite design and arrangement, which fails to be absolutely perfect, probably from the nature of the materials at the arranger's disposal?

We are, therefore, justified in coming to the provisional conclusion, that Second Isaiah is not a unity, in so far as it consists of a number of pieces by different men, whom God raised up at various times perhaps before, but certainly during, and after the Exile, to comfort and exhort amid the shifting circumstance and tempers of His people; but that it is a unity, in so far as these pieces have been gathered together by an editor after the Return from the Exile, in an order as regular both in point of time and subject as the somewhat mixed material would permit. It is in this sense that throughout this volume we shall talk of 'our prophet,' or 'the prophet;' up to chap. lv, at least, we shall feel that the expression is literally true; after that it is rather an editorial than an original unity which is apparent. In this question of unity the dramatic style of the prophecy forms, no doubt, the greatest difficulty. Who shall dare to determine of the many soliloquies, apostrophes, lyrics, and other pieces that are here gathered, often in want of any connection save that of dramatic grouping and a certain sympathy of temper, whether they are by the same author or have been collected from several origins? We must be content to leave the matter uncertain. One great reason, which we have not yet quoted, for

supposing that the whole prophecy is not by one man, is that if it had been his name would certainly have come down with it.<sup>1</sup>

Do not let it be thought that such a conclusion, as we have been led to, is merely a dogma of modern criticism. Here, if anywhere, the critic is but the patient student of Scripture, searching for the testimony of the sacred text about itself, and formulating that. If it be found that such a testimony conflicts with ecclesiastical tradition, however ancient and universal, so much the worse for tradition. *Litera Scripta manet*. When we know that the only evidence for the Isaian authorship of chaps. xl-lxvi is tradition, supported by an unthinking interpretation of New Testament citations, while the whole testimony of these Scriptures themselves denies them to be Isaiah's, we cannot help making our choice, and accepting the testimony of Scripture. Do we find them any the less wonderful or Divine? Do they comfort less? Do they speak with less power to the conscience? Do they testify with more uncertain voice to our Lord and Saviour? It will be the task of the following pages to show that, interpreted in connection with the history out of which they themselves say that God's Spirit drew them, these twenty-seven chapters become only more prophetic of Christ, and more comforting and instructive to men, than they were before.

But the remarkable fact is, that anciently tradition itself appears to have agreed with the results of modern scholarship. The original place of the Book of Isaiah in the Jewish canon seems to have been after both Jeremiah and Ezekiel,<sup>2</sup> a fact which goes to prove that

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 5, 17.

<sup>2</sup> According to the arrangement given in the Talmud (Baba bathra, f. 14, col. 2): 'Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, the Twelve.' Cf. Bleek, *Introduction to Old Testament*, on Isaiah; Orelli's *Isaiah*, Eng. ed., p. 214; Ryle, *The Canon of the O.T.*, p. 227. Budde, recalling this

it did not reach completion till a later date than the works of these two prophets of the Exile.

If now it be asked, Why should a series of prophecies written in the Exile be attached to the authentic works of Isaiah? that is a fair question, and one which the supporters of the exilic authorship have the duty of endeavouring to answer. Fortunately they are not under the necessity of falling back on the supposition that this attachment was due to the error of some scribe, or to the custom which ancient writers practised of filling up any part of a volume, that remained blank when one book was finished, with the writing of any other that would fit the place.<sup>1</sup> The first of these reasons is too accidental, the second, while possible, is by itself insufficient, in face of the undoubted sympathy which exists among all parts of the Book of Isaiah. Whether Isaiah himself plainly prophesied of an exile longer than his own generation experienced, and of a return from it is, as we have seen, doubtful, though many see no reason to dispute his claims to the predictions about Babylon in chaps. xxi and xxxix. But, at least, the Book attributed to him, chaps. i-xxxix, and probably collected before chaps. xl-lxvi, contains such predictions. Isaiah's, too, more than any other prophet's, were those great and final hopes of the Old Testament—the survival of Israel and the gathering of the Gentiles to the worship of Yahweh at Jerusalem. Now it is for the express purpose of

tradition that the Book of Isaiah originally followed that of Ezekiel, suggests that the anonymous chs. xl-lxvi were attached to the older i-xxxix in order to fill up a roll of approximately the same size as each of the rolls filled by Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Prophets, and was placed third in the order, because it was third in volume of the four. The proportions which he reckons for them are Jeremiah 24, Ezekiel 21, Isaiah 19, the Twelve 17 (*Geschichte*, pp. 157 f.).

<sup>1</sup> Robertson Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, 109.

emphasising the immediate fulfilment of such ancient predictions that Isa. xl-lxvi were published. Although our prophet has *new things to publish*, his first business is to show that the *former things have come to pass*, especially the Exile, the survival of a Remnant, the sending of a Deliverer, the doom of Babylon. What more natural than to attach to these earlier utterances prophecies, of which the events these pointed to were the vindication and fulfilment? It is impossible to be dogmatic on the point. But these facts—that our chapters are concerned, as no other Scriptures are, with the fulfilment of previous prophecies; that it is the prophecies in Isaiah i-xxxix which are the original and fullest prediction of the events they are busy with; and that the form, in which those prophecies are handed down, did not preclude additions of this kind to them—contribute very evident reasons why Isa. xl-lxvi, though written in the Exile, should be attached to Isa. i-xxxix.<sup>1</sup>

Thus we present a theory of the exilic authorship of Isa. xl-lxvi, within itself complete and consistent, suited to all parts of the evidence, and not opposed by the authority of any part of Scripture. In consequence of its conclusion, our duty, before proceeding to the exposition of the chapters, is twofold: first, to connect the time of Isaiah with the period of the Captivity, and then to sketch the condition of Israel in Exile. This we shall undertake in the next three chapters.

<sup>1</sup> It is the theory of some, that although Isa. xl-lxvi dates as a whole from the Exile, there are passages in it by Isaiah himself, or in his style by pupils of his (Klostermann in Herzog's *Encyclopædia* and Bredenkamp in his *Commentary*). But this, while possible, is beyond proof.



## CHAPTER II

### FROM ISAIAH TO THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

701-587 B.C.

AT first sight, the circumstances of Judah in the last ten years of the seventh century present a strong resemblance to her fortunes in the last ten years of the eighth. The empire of her world is again divided between Egypt and a Mesopotamian power. Syria is again the field of their doubtful battle, and the question, to which of the two shall homage be paid, still forms the politics of all her states. Judah still vacillates, intrigues, and draws down on herself the wrath of the North by her treaties with Egypt. Again there is a great prophet and statesman, whose concern is righteousness, who exposes both the immorality of his people and the folly of their politics, and who summons the *evil from the North* as God's scourge upon Israel: Isaiah has been succeeded by Jeremiah. And, as if to complete the analogy, the nation has once more passed through a puritan reformation. Josiah has, even more thoroughly than Hezekiah, effected the disestablishment of idols.

Beneath this circumstantial resemblance, however, there is one fundamental difference. The strength of Isaiah's preaching was bent, especially during the closing years of the century, to establish the inviolableness of Jerusalem. Against the threats of the Assyrian

siege, and in spite of his own more formidable conscience of his people's corruption, Isaiah persisted that Sion should not be taken, and that the people, though cut down to their roots, should remain planted in the land,—the stock of an imperial nation in the latter days. This prophecy was vindicated by the marvellous relief of Jerusalem on the apparent eve of her capture in 701. But its echoes had not yet died away, when Jeremiah to his generation delivered the very opposite message. Round him the popular prophets babbled by rote Isaiah's ancient assurances about Sion. Their soft repetitions lapped pleasantly upon the self-confidence of the people. But Jeremiah called down the storm. Even while prosperity seemed to give him the lie, he predicted the speedy ruin of Temple and City, and summoned Judah's enemies against her in the name of the God, on whose former word she relied for peace. The contrast between the two great prophets grows most dramatic in their conduct during the respective sieges, of which each was the central figure. Isaiah, alone steadfast in a city of despair, defying the taunts of the heathen, rekindling within the dispirited defenders, whom the enemy sought to bribe to desertion, the passions of patriotism and religion, proclaiming always, as with the voice of a trumpet, that Sion must stand inviolate ; Jeremiah, on the contrary, declaring the futility of resistance, counselling each citizen to save his own life from the ruin of the state in treaty with the enemy, and even arrested as a deserter,—these two contrasting figures and attitudes gather up the difference which the century had wrought in the fortunes of the City of God. And so, while in 701 Jerusalem triumphed in the Lord by the sudden raising of the Assyrian siege, three years after the next century was out she twice succumbed to the



Assyrian's successor, and nine years later was totally destroyed.

What is the reason of this difference, which a century sufficed to work? Why was the sacredness of Judah's shrine not as much an article of Jeremiah's as of Isaiah's creed,—as much an element of Divine providence in 600 as in 700 B.C.? This is not a hard question to answer, if we keep in our regard two things—firstly, the moral condition of the people, and, secondly, the necessities of the spiritual religion, which was identified for the time with their fortunes.

The Israel, which was delivered into captivity at the word of Jeremiah, was a people at once more hardened and more exhausted than the Israel, which, in spite of its sin, Isaiah's efforts had succeeded in preserving upon its own land. A century had come and gone of further grace and opportunity, but the grace had been resisted, the opportunity abused, and the people stood more guilty and more wilful than ever before God. Even clearer, however, than the deserts of the people was the need of their religion. That local and temporary victory—after all, only the relief of a mountain fortress and a tribal shrine—with which Isaiah had identified the will and honour of Almighty God, could not be the climax of the history of a spiritual religion. It was impossible for Monotheism to rest on so narrow and material a security as that. The faith, which was to overcome the world, could not be satisfied with a merely national triumph. The time must arrive—were it only by the ordinary progress of the years and unhastened by human guilt—for faith and piety to be weaned from the forms of an earthly temple, however sacred; for the individual—after all, the real unit of religion—to be rendered independent of the community and cast upon his God alone; and for this

people, to whom the oracles of the living God had been entrusted, to be led out from the selfish pride of guarding these for their own honour—to be led out, were it through the breaches of their hitherto inviolate walls, and amid the smoke of all that was most sacred to them, so that in level contact with mankind they might learn to communicate their glorious trust. Therefore, while the Exile was undoubtedly the penance, which an often-spared but ever more obdurate people had to pay for their accumulated sins, it was also for the meek and the pure-hearted in Israel a step upwards even from the faith and the results of Isaiah—perhaps the most effectual step which Israel's religion ever took. Schultz has finely said: 'The proper Tragedy of History—doom required by long-gathering guilt, and launched upon a generation which for itself is really turning towards good—is most strikingly consummated in the Exile.'<sup>1</sup> Yes: but this is only half the truth. The accomplishment of the moral tragedy is really but one incident in a religious epic—the development of a spiritual faith. Long-delaying Nemesis overtakes at last the sinners, but the shock of the blows, which beat the guilty nation into captivity, releases their religion from its material bonds. Israel on the way to Exile is on the way to become Israel after the Spirit.

With these principles to guide us, let us now, for a little, thread our way through the crowded details of the decline and fall of the Jewish state.

Isaiah's own age had foreboded the necessity of exile for Judah. There was the great precedent of Samaria, and Judah's sin was not less than her sister's. When the authorities at Jerusalem wished to put Jeremiah to death for the heresy of predicting the ruin of the sacred city, it was pointed out in his defence that a similar

<sup>1</sup> *Old Testament Theology*, trans. by Paterson (1892), vol. i, ch. xv.

prediction had been made by Micah, the contemporary of Isaiah. And how much had happened since then ! The triumph of Israel's God in 701, the stronger faith and purer practice, which had followed as long as Hezekiah reigned, gave way to an idolatrous reaction under his successor Manasseh. This reaction, while it increased the guilt of the people, by no means diminished their religious fear. They carried into it the conscience of their former puritanism—diseased, we might say delirious, but not dead. Men felt their sin and feared Heaven's wrath, and rushed headlong into the gross and fanatic exercises of idolatry, in order to wipe away the one and avert the other. It availed nothing. After an absence of thirty years the Assyrian arms returned in full strength, and Manasseh himself is said to have been carried captive across the Euphrates. But penitence revived, and for a time it appeared as if this were to be at last valid for salvation. Israel made huge strides towards their ideal life of a good conscience and outward prosperity. Josiah, the pious, came to the throne. The Book of the Law was discovered in 621–620, and king and people rallied to its summons with the utmost loyalty. All the nation *stood to the covenant*. The single sanctuary was vindicated, the high places destroyed, the land purged of idols. There were no great military triumphs, but Assyria, so long the accepted scourge of God, gave signs of breaking up ; and we can feel the vigour and self-confidence, induced by years of reform and prosperity, in Josiah's ambition to extend his borders, and especially in his daring assault upon Necho of Egypt at Megiddo, when Necho passed north to the invasion of Assyria. Altogether, it was a people that imagined itself righteous, and counted upon a righteous God. In such days who could dream of exile ?

But in 608 the ideal was shivered. Israel was threshed at Megiddo, and Josiah, the king after God's own heart, was slain on the field.<sup>1</sup> And then happened, what happened at other times in Israel's history when disillusion of this kind came down. The nation fell asunder into the elements of which it was ever so strange a composition. The masses, whose conscience did not rise beyond the mere performance of the Law, nor their view of God higher than that of a Patron of the state, bound by His covenant to reward with material success the loyalty of His clients, were disappointed with the results of their service and of His providence. Being a new generation from Manasseh's time, they thought to give the strange gods another turn. The idols were restored, and after the discredit which 'righteousness' received at Megiddo, it would appear that social injustice and crime of many kinds dared to be very bold. Jehoahaz, who reigned for three months after Josiah, and Jehoiakim, who succeeded him, were idolaters. The loftier few, like Jeremiah, had never been deceived by the people's outward allegiance to the Temple or the Law, nor considered this valid either to atone for the past or now to fulfil the holy demands of Yahweh; and were confirmed by the disaster at Megiddo, and the consequent reaction to idolatry, in the stern and hopeless views of the people which they had always entertained. They kept reiterating a speedy captivity. Between these parties stood the formal successors of earlier prophets, so much the slaves of tradition that they had neither conscience for their people's sins nor understanding of the world around them, but could only affirm in the strength of ancient oracles that Sion should not be

<sup>1</sup> See the present writer's *Jeremiah*, Lecture V.

destroyed. Strange is it to see how this party, building upon the promises of their God through a prophet like Isaiah, should be taken advantage of by the idolaters, but scouted by Yahweh's own servants. Thus they mingle and conflict. Who indeed can distinguish all the elements of so ancient and so rich a life, as they chase, overtake, and wrestle with each other, hurrying down the rapids to the final cataract? Let us leave them for a moment, while we mark the catastrophe itself. They will be more easily distinguished in the calm below.

It was from the North that Jeremiah summoned the vengeance of God upon Judah. In his earlier threats he probably meant the Scythians; but by 605-604, when Nebuchadrezzar, Nabopolassar of Babylon's son, the rising general of the age, defeated Pharaoh at Carchemish, all men accepted Jeremiah's nomination for this successor of Assyria in the lordship of Western Asia. From Carchemish Nebuchadrezzar overran Syria. Jehoiakim paid tribute to him, and Judah at last felt the grip of the hand that was to drag her into exile. Jehoiakim attempted to throw it off in 602; but, after harassing him for four years by means of some allies, Nebuchadrezzar took his capital, executed him, suffered Jehoiachin, his successor, to reign only three months, took Jerusalem a second time, and carried off to Babylon the first great portion of the people. This was in 598 or 597, only about ten years from the death of Josiah, and twenty-two from the discovery of the Book of the Law.<sup>1</sup>

The exact numbers of this first captivity of the Jews it is impossible to determine. The annalist sets the soldiers at seven thousand, the smiths and craftsmen

<sup>1</sup> For this paragraph, see more fully *Jeremiah*, Lectures IV, 2, V, 1, 3, etc.



at one thousand ; so that, making allowance for other classes whom he mentions, the grown men must alone have been over ten thousand ;<sup>1</sup> but how many women went, and how many children—the most important factor for the period of the Exile with which we have to deal—it is impossible to estimate.<sup>2</sup> The total number of persons can scarcely have been less than twenty-five thousand. More important, however, than their number was the quality of these exiles, and this we can easily appreciate. The royal family and the court were taken, a large number of influential persons, *the mighty men of the land*, or what must have been nearly all the fighting men, with the necessary artificers ; priests also went, Ezekiel among them, and probably representatives of other classes not mentioned by the annalist. That this was the virtue and flower of the nation is proved by a double witness. Not only did the citizens, for the remaining ten years of Jerusalem's life, look to these exiles for her deliverance, but Jeremiah himself counted them the sound half of Israel—a *basket of good figs*, as he expressed it, beside *a basket of bad ones*. They were at least under discipline, but the remnant of Jerusalem persisted in the wilfulness of the past.

For although Jeremiah remained in the city, and the house of David and a considerable population, and although Jeremiah himself held a higher position in public esteem since the vindication of his word by the

<sup>1</sup> The figure actually mentioned in 2 Kings xxiv. 14, but as Stade points out (*Geschichte*, p. 680), vv. 14, 15 interrupt the narrative, and may have been intruded here from the account of the later captivity.

<sup>2</sup> The Assyrian bas-reliefs show families being marched off together, and the accounts of the Babylonian captivity imply that this included women and children. Cf. Jeremiah's appeals to the exiles to beget children. For a fuller study of the numbers recorded of the various Jewish captivities, see the present writer's *Jerusalem*, vol. ii, ch. x, 'The Desolate City.'

events of 598, yet he could not be blind to the unchanged character of the people, and the thorough doom which their last respite had only more evidently proved to be inevitable. Gangs of false prophets, both at home and among the exiles, might predict a speedy return. All the Jewish ability of intrigue, with the lavish promises of Egypt and frequent embassies from other nations, might work for the overthrow of Babylon. But Jeremiah and Ezekiel knew better. Across the distance which now separated them they chanted, as it were in antiphon, alternate strophes of Judah's dirge. Jeremiah bade the exiles not to remember Sion, but 'let them settle down,' he said, 'into the life of the land they are in, building houses, planting gardens, and begetting children, and *seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto Yahweh for it, for in the peace thereof ye shall have peace*—the Exile shall last seventy years.' And as Jeremiah in Sion blessed Babylon, so Ezekiel in Babylon cursed Sion, thundering back that Jerusalem must be utterly wasted through siege and famine, pestilence and captivity. There is no rush of hope through Ezekiel. His expectations are all distant. He lives either in memory or in cold fancy. His pictures of restoration are too elaborate to mean speedy fulfilment. They are the work of a man with time on his hands; one does not build so colossally for to-morrow. Thus reinforced from abroad, Jeremiah proclaimed Nebuchadrezzar as *the servant of Yahweh*, and summoned him to work *Yahweh's* doom upon the city. The predicted blockade came in the ninth year of Sedekiah. The false hopes which still sustained the people, their trust in Egypt, the arrival of an Egyptian army in result of their intrigue, as well as all their piteous bravery, only afforded time for the fulfilment of the



terrible details of their penalty. For nearly eighteen months the siege closed in—months of famine and pestilence, of faction and quarrel and falling away to the enemy. Then, in 586, Jerusalem broke up. The besiegers gained the northern suburb and stormed the middle gate. Sedekiah and the army burst their lines only to be captured on an aimless flight at Jericho. A few weeks more, and a forlorn defence by civilians of the interior parts of the city was at last overwhelmed. The exasperated besiegers gave her up to fire—the *house of Yahweh, the king's house, and every great house*—and tore to the stones the stout walls that resisted the conflagration. As the city was levelled, so the citizens were dispersed. A great number—and among them the king's family—were put to death. The king himself was blinded, and, along with a host of his subjects, impossible for us to estimate, and with all the temple furniture, was carried to Babylon. A few peasants were left to cultivate the land ; a few superior personages—perhaps such as, with Jeremiah, had favoured the Babylonians, and Jeremiah was among them—were left at Mişpah under a Jewish viceroy. It was a poor apparition of a state ; but, as if the very ghost of Israel must be chased from the land, even this small community was broken up, and almost every one of its members fled to Egypt. The Exile was complete.

## CHAPTER III

### WHAT ISRAEL TOOK INTO EXILE

**B**EFORE we follow the captives along the roads that lead to exile, we may take account of the spiritual goods which they carried with them, and were to realise in their retirement. Never in all history did paupers of this world go forth more richly laden with the treasures of heaven.

1. First of all, we must emphasise and define their MONOTHEISM. We must emphasise it as against those who would fain persuade us that Israel's monotheism was for the most part the product of the Exile ; we must analyse its contents and define its limits among the people, if we would appreciate the extent to which it spread and the peculiar temper which it assumed, as set forth in the prophecy we are about to study.

Idolatry was by no means dead in Israel at the fall of Jerusalem. On the contrary, during the last years which the nation spent within those sacred walls, which had been so miraculously preserved in the sight of the world by Yahweh, idolatry increased, and to the end remained as determined and fanatic as the people's defence of Yahweh's own temple. The Jews who fled to Egypt applied themselves to the worship of the Queen of Heaven in spite of all the remonstrances of Jeremiah, and him they carried with them, not because they listened to him as the prophet of the One True God, but superstitiously, as if he were a pledge of the

favour of one of the many gods, whom they were anxious to propitiate. And the earliest effort, upon which we shall have to follow our own prophet, is the effort to crush the worship of images among the Babylonian exiles. Yet when Israel returned from Babylon the people were wholly monotheist ; when Jerusalem was rebuilt no idol came back to her.

That this change was mainly the result of the residence in Babylon and of truths learned there, must be denied by all who remember the creed and doctrine about God, which in their literature the people carried with them into exile. The law was already written, and the whole nation had sworn to it : *Hear, O Israel, Yahweh our God ; Yahweh is One, and thou shalt worship Yahweh thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength.* These words, it is true, may be so strictly interpreted as to mean no more than that there was one God for Israel : other gods might exist, but Yahweh was Sole Deity for His people. It is maintained that such a view receives some support from the custom of prophets, who, while they affirmed Yahweh's supremacy, talked of other gods as if they were real existences. But argument from this habit of the prophets is precarious : such a mode of speech may have been a mere accommodation to a popular point of view. And, surely, we have only to recall what Isaiah and Jeremiah had uttered concerning Yahweh's Godhead, to be persuaded that Israel's monotheism, before the beginning of the Exile, was a far more broad and spiritual faith than the mere belief that Yahweh was the Sovereign Deity of the nation, or the satisfaction of the desires of Jewish hearts alone. Righteousness was not coincident with Israel's life and interest ; righteousness was universally supreme, and it was in righteousness that Isaiah saw Yahweh

exalted.<sup>1</sup> There is no more prevailing witness to the unity of God than the conscience, which in this matter takes far precedence of the intellect; and it was on the testimony of conscience that the prophets based Israel's monotheism. Yet they did not omit to enlist the reason as well. Isaiah and Jeremiah delight to draw deductions from the reasonableness of Yahweh's working in nature to the reasonableness of His processes in history,—analogies which could not fail to impress both intellect and imagination with the fact that men inhabit a universe, that One is the will and mind which works in all things. But to this training of conscience and reason, the Jews, at the beginning of the Exile, felt the addition of another considerable influence. Their history lay at last complete, and their conscience was at leisure from the making of its details to survey it as a whole. That long past, seen now by undazzled eyes from under the shadow of exile, presented through all its changing fortunes a single and a definite course. One was the intention of it, one its judgement from first to last. The Jew saw in it nothing but righteousness, the quality of a God, who spake the same word from the beginning, who never broke His word, and who at last had summoned to its fulfilment the greatest of the world-powers. In those historical books, which were collected and edited during the Exile, we observe each of the kings and generations of Israel, in their turn, confronted with the same high standard of fidelity to the One True God and His holy Law. The regularity and rigour, with which they are thus judged, have been condemned by some critics as an arbitrary and unfair application of the standard of a later faith to the conduct of ruder and less responsible

<sup>1</sup> See vol. i, pp. xv, 9, 35, 60, 99, 348.

ages. But, apart from the question of historical accuracy, we cannot fail to remark that this method of writing history is at least instinct with the Oneness of God, and the unvarying validity of His Law from generation to generation. Israel's God was the same, their conscience told them, down all their history ; but now as He summoned one after another of the great world-powers to do His bidding,—Assyria, Babylon, Persia,—how universal did He prove His dominion to be ! Unchanging through all time, He was surely omnipotent through all space.

This short review—in which, for the sake of getting a complete view of our subject, we have anticipated a little—has shown that Israel had enough within themselves, in the teaching of their prophets and in the lessons of their own history, to account for that consummate expression of Yahweh's Godhead, which is contained in our prophet, and to which every one allows the character of an absolute monotheism. We shall find this, it is true, to be higher and more comprehensive than anything which is said about God in pre-exilic Scriptures. The prophet argues the claims of Yahweh, not only with the ardour that is born of faith, but often with the scorn which indicates the intellect at work. It is monotheism, treated not only as a practical belief or a religious duty, but as a necessary truth of reason ; not only as the secret of faith and the special experience of Israel, but also as an essential conviction of human nature, so that not to believe in One God is a thing irrational and absurd for Gentiles as well as Jews. God's infinitude in the works of creation, His universal providence in history, are preached with greater power than ever before ; and the gods of the nations are treated as things, in whose existence no reasonable person can possibly believe. In short, our great



prophet of the Exile has already learned to obey the law of Deuteronomy as it was expounded by Christ. Deuteronomy says, *Thou shalt love Yahweh thy God with all thine heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength.* Christ added, *and with all thy mind.* This was what our prophet did. He held his monotheism *with all his mind.* We shall find him conscious of it, not only as a religious affection, but as a necessary intellectual conviction ; which if a man has not, he is less than a man. Hence the scorn, which he pours upon the idols and mythologies of his conquerors. Beside his tyrants, though in physical strength he was but a worm to them, the Jew felt that he walked, by virtue of his faith in One God, their intellectual master.

We shall see all this illustrated later on. Meantime, what we are concerned to show is, that there is enough to account for this high faith within Israel themselves—in their prophecy and in the lessons of their history. And where indeed are we to be expected to go in search of the sources of Israel's monotheism, if not to themselves ? To the Babylonians ? The Babylonians had nothing spiritual to teach to Israel ; our prophet regards them with scorn. To the Persians, who broke across Israel's horizon with Cyrus ? Our prophet's high statement of monotheism is of earlier date than the advent of Cyrus to Babylon. Nor did Cyrus, when he came, give any help to the faith, for in his public edicts he owned the gods of Babylon and the God of Israel with equal care and equal policy. It was not because Cyrus and his Persians were monotheists, that our prophet saw the sovereignty of his God vindicated, but it was because Yahweh was sovereign that the prophet knew that the Persians would serve His holy purposes.

2. But if in Deuteronomy the exiles carried with them the Law of the One God, they preserved in



Jeremiah's writings what may be called the charter of the INDIVIDUAL MAN. Jeremiah had found religion in Judah a public and a national affair. The individual derived his spiritual value only from being a member of the nation, and through the public exercises of the national faith. But, partly by his own religious experience, and partly by the course of events, Jeremiah was enabled to accomplish what may be justly described as the vindication of the individual. Of his own separate value before God, and of his right of access to his Maker, apart from the nation, Jeremiah himself was conscious, having belonged to God before he belonged to his mother, his family, or his nation. *Before I formed thee in the body I knew thee, and before thou camest out of the womb I consecrated thee.*<sup>1</sup> His whole life was but the lesson of how *one* man can be for God and all the nation on the other side. And it was in the strength of this solitary experience, that he insisted, in his famous thirty-first chapter, on the individual responsibility of man and on every man's immediate communication with God's Spirit; and that, when the ruin of the state was imminent, he advised each of his friends to *take his own life* out of it *for a prey.*<sup>2</sup> But Jeremiah's doctrine of the religious value and independence of the individual had a complement. Though the prophet felt so keenly his separate responsibility and right of access to God, and his religious independence of the people, he nevertheless clave to the people with all his heart. He was not, like some other prophets, outside the doom he preached. He might have saved himself, for he had many offers of safety from the Babylonians. But he chose to suffer with his people—he, the saint of God, with the idolaters.

<sup>1</sup> Jer. i. 5.<sup>2</sup> Jer. xlv.

More than that, it may be said that Jeremiah suffered for the people. It was not they, with their dead conscience and careless mind, but he, with his tender conscience and breaking heart, who bore the reproach of their sins, the anger of the Lord, and all the agonising knowledge of his country's inevitable doom. In Jeremiah one man did suffer for the people.

In our prophecy, which is absorbed with the deliverance of the nation as a whole, there was, of course, no occasion to develop Jeremiah's remarkable suggestions about each individual soul of man. In fact, these suggestions were germs, which, blossoming in many a Psalm and other Jewish writing, reached their fulness only with Jesus Christ. Jeremiah himself uttered them, not as demands for the moment, but as ideals that would only be realised when the New Covenant was made.<sup>1</sup> Our prophecy has nothing to say about them. But that figure, which Jeremiah's life presented, of One Individual—of One Individual standing in moral solitude over against the whole nation, and in a sense suffering for the nation, can hardly have been absent from the influences, which moulded the marvellous confession of the people in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, where they see the solitary servant of God on one side and themselves on the other, *and Yahweh made to light on him the iniquities of us all*. It is true that the exiles themselves had some consciousness of suffering for others. *Our fathers*, cried a voice in their midst, when Jerusalem broke up, *Our fathers have sinned, and we have borne their iniquities*. But Jeremiah had been a willing sufferer for his people; and the fifty-third chapter is, as we shall see, more like his way of bearing his generation's guilt for love's sake

<sup>1</sup> This is especially clear from ch. xxxi. See *Jeremiah*, Lecture, VIII, 2.

than their way of bearing their fathers' guilt in the inevitable entail of sin.<sup>1</sup>

3. To these beliefs in the unity of God, the religious worth of the individual and the virtue of his self-sacrifice, we must add some experiences of scarcely less value rising out of the DESTRUCTION OF THE MATERIAL AND POLITICAL FORMS—the temple, the city, the monarchy—with which the faith of Israel had been so long identified.

Without this destruction, it is safe to say, those beliefs could not have assumed their purest form. Take, for instance, the belief in the unity of God. There is no doubt that this belief was immensely helped in Israel by the abolition of all the provincial sanctuaries under Josiah, by the limitation of Divine worship to one temple and of valid sacrifice to one altar. But yet it was well that this temple should enjoy its singular rights for only thirty years and then be destroyed. For a monotheism, however lofty, which depended upon the existence of any shrine, however gloriously vindicated by Divine providence, was not a purely spiritual faith. Or, again, take the individual. The individual could not realise how truly he himself was the highest temple of God, and God's most pleasing sacrifice a broken and a contrite heart, till the routine of legal sacrifice was interrupted and the ancient altar torn down. Or, once more, take that high, ultimate doctrine of sacrifice, that the most inspiring thing for men, the most effectual propitiation before God, is the self-devotion and offering up of a free and reasonable soul, the righteous for the unrighteous—how could common Jews have adequately learned that truth, in

<sup>1</sup> Having read through the Book of Jeremiah often again since I wrote the above paragraph, I am more than ever impressed with the influence of his life upon Isa. xl-lxvi. See my *Jeremiah*, Lectures I and VIII.

days when, according to immemorial practice, the bodies of bulls and goats bled daily on the one valid altar? The city and temple, therefore, went up in flames that Israel might learn that God is a Spirit, and dwelleth not in a house made with hands; that men are His temple, and their hearts the sacrifices well-pleasing in His sight; and that beyond the bodies and blood of beasts, with their daily necessity of being offered, He was preparing for them another Sacrifice, of perpetual and universal power, in the voluntary sufferings of His own holy Servant. It was for this Servant, too, that the monarchy, as it were, abdicated, yielding up to Him all its title to represent Yahweh and to save and to rule His people.

4. Again, as we have already hinted, the fall of the state and city of Jerusalem gave scope to ISRAEL'S MISSIONARY CAREER. The conviction, which had inspired some of Isaiah's assertions of the inviolableness of Şion, was the conviction that, if Şion were overthrown and the last remnant of Israel uprooted from the land, there must necessarily follow the extinction of the only true testimony to the living God which the world contained. But by a century later that testimony was firmly secured in the hearts and consciences of the people wheresoever they might be scattered; and what was now needed was exactly such a dispersion,—in order that Israel might become aware of the world for whom the testimony was meant, and grow expert in the methods by which it was to be proclaimed. Priesthood has its human as well as its Godward side. The latter was already sufficiently secured for Israel by their God's age-long seclusion of them in their remote highlands—a people peculiar to Himself. But now the same Providence completed its purpose by casting them upon the world. They mixed with men face to face,

or, still more valuably to themselves, on a level with the most downtrodden and despised of the peoples. With no advantage but the truth, they met the other religions of the world in argument, debating with them upon the principles of a common reason and the facts of a common history. They learned sympathy with the weak things of earth. They discovered that their religion could be taught. But, above all, they became conscious of martyrdom, the indispensable experience of a religion which is to prevail ; and they realised the supreme influence upon men of a love which sacrifices itself. In a word, Israel, in going into exile, put on humanity with all its consequences. How real and thorough the process was, how successful in perfecting their priesthood, may be seen not only from the hopes and obligations towards all mankind, which burst in our prophecy to an urgency and splendour unmatched elsewhere in their history, but still more from the fact that when the Son of God Himself took flesh and became man, there were no words oftener upon His lips to describe His experience and commission, there are no passages which more clearly mirror His work for the world, than the words and the passages in which these Jews of the Exile, stripped to their bare humanity, relate their sufferings or exult in their destiny that should follow.

5. But with their temple in ruins, and all the world before them for the service of God, the Jews go forth to exile upon the distinct PROMISE OF RETURN. The material form of their religion is suspended, not abolished. Let them feel religion in purely spiritual aspects, unassisted by sanctuary or ritual ; let them look upon the world and the oneness of men ; let them learn all God's scope for the truth He has entrusted to them,—and then let them gather back again and



cherish their new experience and ideas for yet a time in the old seclusion. God's discipline of them as a nation is not yet exhausted. They are no mere band of pilgrims or missionaries, with the world for their home ; they are still a people, with their own bit of the earth. If we keep this in mind, it will explain certain apparent anomalies in our prophecy. In all the writings of the Exile the reader is confused by a strange mingling of the spiritual and the material, the universal and the local. The moral restoration of the people to pardon and righteousness is identified with their political restoration to Judah and Jerusalem. They have been separated from ritual in order to cultivate a more spiritual religion, but it is to this that a restoration to ritual is promised for a reward. While Jeremiah insists upon the free and immediate communication of every believer with his Lord, Ezekiel builds a more exclusive priesthood, a more elaborate system of worship. Within our prophecy, while one voice deprecates a house for God built with hands, affirming that the Lord dwells with every one who is of a poor and contrite spirit, other voices dwell fondly on the prospect of the new temple and exult in its material glory. This double line of feeling is not merely due to the presence in Israel of those two opposite tempers of mind, which so naturally appear in every national literature. But a special purpose of God is in it. Dispersed to obtain more spiritual ideas of God and man and the world, Israel must be gathered back again to get these by heart, to enshrine them in literature, and to transmit them to posterity, as they could alone be securely transmitted, in the memories of a nation, in the liturgies and canons of a living Church.

Therefore the Jews, though torn for their discipline from Jerusalem, continued to identify themselves more



passionately than ever with their desecrated city. A prayer of the period exclaims : *Thy saints take pleasure in her stones, and her dust is dear to them.*<sup>1</sup> The exiles proved this by taking her name. The prophets addressed them as *Sion* and *Jerusalem*. Scattered and leaderless groups of captives in a far-off land, they were still that City of God. She had not ceased to be ; ruined and forsaken as she lay, she was yet *graven on the palms of Yahweh's hands ; and her walls were continually before Him.*<sup>2</sup> The exiles kept up the register of her families ; they prayed towards her ; they looked to return to build her bulwarks ; they spent long hours of their captivity in tracing upon the dust of that foreign land the groundplan of her restored temple.

With such beliefs in God and man and sacrifice, with such hopes and opportunities for their world-mission, but also with such a bias back to the material Jerusalem, did Israel pass into exile.

<sup>1</sup> Psalm cii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xlix. 16.

## CHAPTER IV

### ISRAEL IN EXILE

FROM 598 OR 586 TILL 538 B.C.

IT is remarkable how completely the sound of the march from Jerusalem to Babylon has died out of Jewish history. It was an enormous movement: twice over within ten years, ten thousand Jews, at the very least, must have trodden the highway to the Euphrates; and yet, except for a doubtful verse or two in the Psalter, they have left no echo of their passage. The sufferings of the siege before, the remorse and lamentation of the Exile after, still pierce our ears through the Book of Lamentations and the Psalms by the rivers of Babylon. We know exactly how the end was fulfilled. We see most vividly the shifting panorama of the siege,—the city in famine, under the assault, and in smoke; upon the streets the pining children, the stricken princes, the groups of men with sullen, famine-black faces, the heaps of slain, mothers feeding on the bodies of the infants whom their sapless breasts could not keep alive; by the walls the hanging and crucifixion of multitudes, with all the fashion of Chaldean cruelty; the delicate and the children stumbling under heavy loads, no survivor free from the pollution of blood. Upon the hills around the neighbouring tribes are gathered to jeer at *the day of Jerusalem*, and to cut off her fugitives;

we even see the departing captives turn, as the worm turns, to curse *those children of Edom*. But there the vision closes. Was it this hot hate which blinded them to the sights of the way, or that weariness and depression among strange scenes, which falls upon all unaccustomed caravans, and has stifled the memory of other great historical marches? The roads which the exiles traversed were of immemorial use in the history of their fathers; almost every day they must have passed names which, for at least two centuries, had rung in the market-place of Jerusalem—the Way of the Sea, across Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, round Hermon, and past Damascus; or between the two Lebanons, past Hamath, and past Arpad; or less probably by Tadmor-in-the-Wilderness and Rezeph,—till they reached the river on which the national ambition had lighted as the frontier of the Messianic Empire, and whose rolling greatness had so often proved the fascination and despair of a people of uncertain brooks and trickling aqueducts. Crossing the Euphrates by one of its numerous passages—either at Carchemish, if they struck the river so high, or at the more usual Thapsacus, Tiphseh, *the passage*, where Xenophon crossed with his Greeks, or at some other place—the caravans must have turned south across the Habor, on whose upper banks the captives of Northern Israel had been scattered, and then have traversed the picturesque country of Aram-Naharaim, past Circesium and Rehoboth-of-the-River, and many another ancient place mentioned in the story of the Patriarchs, till through dwindling hills they reached His—that marvellous site which travellers praise as one of the great view-points of the world—and looked out at last upon the land of their captivity, the boundless, almost level tracts of Chaldea, the first home of the race, the traditional

Garden of Eden. But of all that we are told nothing. Every eye in the huge caravans seems to have been as the eyes of the blinded king whom they carried with them,—able to weep, but not to see.

One fact, however, was too large to be missed by these sad, wayworn men ; and it has left traces on their literature. In passing from home to exile, the Jews passed from the hills to the plain. They were highlanders. Jerusalem lies over two thousand feet above the sea. From its roofs the skyline is mostly a line of hills. To leave the city on almost any side you have to descend. The last monuments of their fatherland, on which the emigrants' eyes could have lingered, were the high crests of Lebanon ; the first prospect of their captivity was a monotonous level. The change was the more impressive, that to the hearts of Hebrews it could not fail to be sacramental. From the mountains came the dew to their native crofts—the dew which, of all earthly blessings, was likest God's grace. For their prophets, the ancient hills had been the symbols of their God's faithfulness. In leaving their highlands, therefore, the Jews not only left the kind of country to which their habits were most adapted and all their natural affections clung ; they left the chosen abode of God, the most evident types of His grace, the perpetual witnesses to His covenant. Ezekiel constantly employs *the mountains* to describe his fatherland. But it is far more with a sacramental longing than a mere homesickness that a psalmist of the Exile cries out, *I will lift up mine eyes to the hills : from whence cometh mine help ?* or that our prophet exclaims : *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace ; that saith unto Sion, Thy God reigneth.*

By the route sketched above, it is at least seven

hundred miles from Jerusalem to Babylon—a distance which, when we take into account that many of the captives walked in fetters, cannot have occupied them less than three months. We may form some conception of the aspect of the caravans from the transportations of captives which are figured on the Assyrian monuments, as in the Assyrian basement in the British Museum. From these it appears as if families were not separated, but marched together. Mules, asses, camels, ox-waggons, and the captives themselves carried goods. Children and women suckling infants were allowed to ride on the waggons. At intervals fully-armed soldiers walked in pairs.<sup>1</sup>

## I

Mesopotamia, the land ‘in the middle of the rivers,’ Euphrates and Tigris, consists of two divisions, an upper and a lower. The dividing line crosses from near Hit or His on the Euphrates to below Samarah on the Tigris. Above this line the country is a gently undulating plain of secondary formation at some elevation above the sea. But Lower Mesopotamia is absolutely flat land, an unbroken stretch of alluvial soil, scarcely higher than the Persian Gulf, upon which it steadily encroaches. Chaldea was confined to this Lower Mesopotamia, and was not larger, Rawlinson

<sup>1</sup> If we would construct for ourselves some more definite idea of that long march from Judah to Babylon, we might assist our imagination by the details of the only other instance on so great a scale of ‘exile by administrative process’—the transportation to Siberia which the Russian Government effected (it is said on good authority) to the extent of eighteen thousand persons a year. Every week throughout the year marching parties, three to four hundred strong, left Tomsk for Irkutsk, doing twelve to twenty miles daily in fetters, with twenty-four hours’ rest every third day, or three hundred and thirty miles in a month (*Century Magazine*, Nov. 1888).

estimates, than the kingdom of Denmark.<sup>1</sup> It is the monotonous level which first impresses the traveller ; but if the season be favourable, he sees this only as the theatre of vast and varied displays of colour, which all visitors vie with one another in describing : ' It is like a rich carpet ; ' ' emerald green, enamelled with flowers of every hue ; ' ' tall wild grasses and broad extents of waving reeds ; ' ' acres of water-lilies ; ' ' acres of pansies.' There was no such country in ancient times for wheat, barley, millet, and sesame ;<sup>2</sup> tamarisks, poplars, and palms ; here and there heavy jungle ; with flashing streams and canals thickly athwart the whole, and all shining the more brilliantly for the interrupting patches of scurvy, nitrous soil, and the grey sandy setting of the desert with its dry scrub. The possible fertility of Chaldea is incalculable. But there are drawbacks. Bounded to the north by so high a tableland, to the south and south-west by a superheated gulf and broad desert, Mesopotamia is the scene of violent changes of atmosphere. The languor of the flat country, the stagnancy and sultriness of the air, of which not only foreigners but the natives themselves complain, is suddenly invaded by southerly winds, of tremendous force and laden with clouds of fine sand, which render the air so dense as to be suffocating, and ' produce a lurid red haze intolerable to the eyes.' Thunderstorms are frequent, and there are very heavy rains. But the winds are the most tremendous. In such an atmosphere we may perhaps discover the original shapes and sounds of Ezekiel's

<sup>1</sup> For the above details, see Rawlinson's *Five Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World*, vol. i.

<sup>2</sup> *Herodotus*, Bk. I ; ' Memoirs by Commander James Felix Jones, I.N.,' in *Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government*, No. XLIII, New Series, 1857 ; Ainsworth's *Euphrates Valley Expedition* ; Layard's *Nineveh*.



turbulent visions—the fiery wheels ; the great cloud with a fire infolding itself ; the colour of amber, with sapphire, or lapis lazuli, breaking through ; the sound of a great rushing. Also the Mesopotamian floods are colossal. The increase of both Tigris and Euphrates is naturally more violent and irregular than that of the Nile.<sup>1</sup> Frequent risings of these rivers spread desolation with inconceivable rapidity, and they ebb only to leave pestilence behind them. If civilisation is to continue, there is need of vast and incessant operations on the part of man.

Thus, both by its fertility and by its violence, this climate—before the curse of God fell on those parts of the world—tended to develop a numerous and industrious race of men, whose numbers were swollen from time to time both by forced and by voluntary immigration. The population must have been very dense. The triumphal lists of Assyrian conquerors of the land, as well as the rubbish mounds which to-day cover its surface, testify to innumerable villages and towns ; while the connecting canals and fortifications, by the making of them and the watching of them, must have filled even the rural districts with the hum and activity of men. Chaldea, however, did not draw all her greatness from herself. There was immense traffic with East and West, between which Babylon lay, for the greater part of antiquity, the world's central market and exchange. The city was practically a port on the Persian Gulf, by canals from which vessels reached her wharves direct from Arabia, India, and Africa. Down the Tigris and Euphrates rafts brought the produce of Armenia and the Caucasus ; but of greater importance than even these rivers were the roads, which ran from

<sup>1</sup> Perrot and Chipiez, *Histoire de l'Art d'Antiquité*, vol. ii : Assyrie, p. 9.

Sardis to Shushan, traversed Media, penetrated Bactria and India, and may be said to have connected the Jaxartes and the Ganges with the Nile and the harbours of the Ægean Sea. These roads all crossed Chaldea and met at Babylon. Together with the rivers and ocean highways, they poured upon her markets the traffic of the whole ancient world.<sup>1</sup>

It was, in short, the very centre of the world—the most populous and busy region of His earth—to which God sent His people for their exile. The monarch, who transplanted them, was the genius of Babylonia incarnate. The chief soldier of his generation, Nebuchadrezzar will live in history as one of the greatest builders of all time. But he fought as he built—that he might traffic. His ambition was to turn the trade with India from the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf, and he thought to effect this by the destruction of Tyre, by the transportation of Arab and Nabathean merchants to Babylon, and by the deepening and regulation of the river between Babylon and the sea.<sup>2</sup>

There is no doubt that Nebuchadrezzar carried the Jews to Babylon not only for political reasons, but in order to employ them upon those large works of irrigation and the building of cities, for which his ambition required hosts of labourers. Thus the exiles were planted, neither in military prisons nor in the comparative isolation of agricultural colonies, but just where Babylonian life was most busy, where they were forced to share and contribute to it, and could not help feeling the daily infection of their captors' habits. Do not let

<sup>1</sup> See the present writer's article in the *Enc. Bibl.* on 'Trade and Commerce,' especially §§ 28-40.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, §§ 56, 57. But the fullest account of Babylonian commerce and the laws which regulated it will be found in C. H. W. Johns, M.A., *Babylonian and Assyrian Laws, Contracts, and Letters*, 1904.

us forget this. It will explain much in what we have to study. It will explain how the captivity, which God inflicted upon the Jews as a punishment, might become in time a new temptation, and why, when the day of redemption arrived, so many forgot that their citizenship was in Şion, and clung to the traffic and the offices of Babylon.

The majority of the exiles appear to have been settled within the city, or, as it has been more correctly called, 'the fortified district,' of Babylon itself. Their mistress was thus constantly before them, at once their despair and their temptation. *Lady of Kingdoms* she lifted herself to heaven from broad wharves and ramparts, by wide flights of stairs and terraces, high walls and hanging gardens, pyramids and towers—so colossal in her buildings, so imperially lavish of space between! No wonder that upon that vast, far-spreading architecture, upon its great squares and between its high portals guarded by giant bulls, the Jew felt himself, as he expressed it, but a poor *worm*. If, even as they stand in our museums, captured and catalogued, one feels as if one crawled in the presence of the fragments of these striding monsters, with how much more of the feeling of the worm must the abject members of that captive nation have writhed before the face of the city, which carried these monsters as the mere ornaments of her skirts, and rose above all kingdoms with her strong feet upon the poor and the meek of the earth?

Ah, the despair of it! To see *her* every day so glorious, to be forced to help *her* ceaseless growth,—and to think how Jerusalem, the daughter of Şion, lay forsaken in ruins! Yet the despair sometimes gave way to temptation. There was not an outline or horizon visible to the captive Jew, not a figure in the motley crowds in which he moved, but must have

fascinated him with the genius of his conquerors. In that level land no mountain, with its witness of God, broke the skyline ; but the work of man was everywhere : curbed and scattered rivers, artificial mounds, buildings of brick, gardens torn from their natural beds and hung high in air by cunning hands to please the taste of a queen ; lavish wealth and force and cleverness, all at the command of one human will. The signature ran across the whole, '*I have done this, and with mine own hand have I gotten me my wealth ;*' and all the nations of the earth came and acknowledged the signature, and worshipped the great city. It was fascinating merely to look on such cleverness, success, and self-confidence ; and who was the poor Jew that he, too, should not be drawn with the intoxicated nations to the worship of this glory which filled his horizon ? If his eyes rose higher, and from these enchantments of men sought refuge in the heavens above, were not even they also a Babylonian realm ? Did not the Chaldean claim the great lights there for his patron gods ? were not the movements of sun, moon, and planets the secret of his science ? did not the tyrant believe that the very stars in their courses fought for him ? And he was vindicated ; he was successful ; he did actually rule the world. There seemed to be no escape from the enchantments of this sorceress city, as the prophets called her, and it is not wonderful that so many Jews fell victims to her worldliness and idolatry.

## II

The social condition of the Jews in Exile is somewhat obscure, and yet, both in connection with the date and with the exposition of some portions of '*Second Isaiah*,'

it is an element of the greatest importance, of which we ought to have as definite an idea as possible.

What are the facts? By far the most significant is that which faces us at the end of the Exile. There, some sixty years after the earlier, and some fifty years after the later, of Nebuchadrezzar's two deportations, we find the Jews a largely multiplied and still regularly organised nation, with considerable property and decided political influence. Not more than forty thousand can have gone into exile, but forty-two thousand returned, and yet left a large portion of the nation behind them. The old families and clans survived; the social ranks were respected; the rich still held slaves; and the former menials of the temple could again be gathered together. Large subscriptions were raised for the pilgrimage, and for the restoration of the temple; a great host of cattle was taken. To such a state of affairs do we see any traces leading up through the Exile itself? We do.

The first host of exiles, the captives of 598, comprised, as we have seen, the better classes of the nation, and appear to have enjoyed considerable independence. They were not scattered, like the slaves in North America, as domestic bondsmen over the surface of the land. Their condition must have much more closely resembled that of the better-treated exiles in Siberia; though of course, as we have seen, it was not a Siberia, but the centre of civilisation, to which they were banished. They remained in communities, with their own official heads, and at liberty to consult their prophets. They were sufficiently in touch with one another, and sufficiently numerous, for the enemies of Babylon to regard them as a considerable political influence, and to treat with them for a revolution against their captors. But Ezekiel's strong condemnation of



this intrigue exhibits their leaders on good terms with the government. Jeremiah bade them throw themselves into the life of the land ; buy and sell, and increase their families and property. At the same time, we cannot but observe that it is only religious sins, with which Ezekiel upbraids them. When he speaks of civic duty or social charity, he either refers to their past or to the life of the remnant still in Jerusalem. There is every reason to believe, therefore, that this captivity was an honourable and an easy one. The captives may have brought some property with them ; they had leisure for the pursuit of business and for the study and practice of their religion. Some of them suffered, of course, from the usual barbarity of Oriental conquerors, and were made eunuchs ; some, by their learning and abstinence, rose to high positions in the court.<sup>1</sup> Probably to the end of the Exile they remained *the good figs*, as Jeremiah had called them. Theirs was, perhaps, the literary work of the Exile ; and theirs, too, may have been the wealth which rebuilt Jerusalem.

But it was different with the second captivity, of 587-586. After the famine, the burning of the city, and the prolonged march, this second host of exiles must have reached Babylonia in an impoverished condition. They were a lower class of men. They had exasperated their conquerors, who, before the march began, subjected many of them to mutilation and cruel death ; and it is, doubtless, echoes of their experience which we find in the more bitter complaints of our prophet. *This is a people robbed and spoiled ; all of them snared in holes, and hid in prison-houses : they are for a prey, and for a spoil. Thou, that is, Babylon, didst show them no mercy ; upon the aged hast thou very*

<sup>1</sup> The Book of Daniel.



*heavily laid thy yoke.*<sup>1</sup> Nebuchadrezzar used them for his building, as Pharaoh had used their forefathers. Some of them, or of their countrymen who had reached Babylonia before them, became the domestic slaves and chattels of their conquerors. Among the contracts and bills of sale of this period we find the cases of slaves with apparently Jewish names.<sup>2</sup>

In short, the state of the Jews in Babylonia resembled what seems to have been their fortune wherever they have settled in a foreign land. Part of them despised and abused, forced to labour or overtaxed; part left alone to cultivate literature or to gather wealth. Some treated with unusual rigour—and perhaps a few of these with reason, as dangerous to the government of the land—but some also, by the versatile genius of their race, advancing to a high place in the political confidence of their captors.

Their application to literature, to their religion, and to commerce must be specially noted.

1. Nothing is more striking in the writings of Ezekiel than the air of large leisure which invests them. Ezekiel lies passive; he broods, gazes, and builds his visions up, in a fashion like none of his terser predecessors; for he had time on his hands, not available to them in days when the history of the nation was still running. Ezekiel's style swells to a greater fulness of rhetoric; his pictures of the future are elaborated with the most minute detail. Prophets before him were speakers, but he is a writer. Many in Israel besides Ezekiel took advantage of the leisure of the Exile to the great increase and arrangement of the national literature. Some Assyriologists have written, as if the schools of Jewish scribes owed their origin entirely

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xlii. 22, xlvii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Records of the Past*, 2nd ser., vol. i, M. Oppert's Translations.

to the Exile.<sup>1</sup> But there were scribes in Israel before this. What the Exile did for these, was to provide them not only with the leisure from national business which we have noted, but with a powerful example of their craft as well. Babylonia at this time was a land full of scribes and makers of libraries. They wrote a language not very different from the Jewish, and cannot but have powerfully infected their Jewish fellows with the spirit of their toil and of their methods. To the Exile we certainly owe a large part of the historical books of the Old Testament, the arrangement of some of the prophetic writings, as well as—though the amount of this is very uncertain—part of the codification of the Law.

2. If the Exile was opportunity to the scribes, it can only have been despair to the priests. In this foreign land the nation was unclean ; none of the old sacrifice or ritual was valid, and the people were reduced to the simplest elements of religion—prayer, fasting, and the reading of religious books. We shall find our prophecy noting the clamour of the exiles to God for *ordinances of righteousness*—that is, for the institution of legal and valid rites.<sup>2</sup> But the great lesson, which prophecy brings to the people of the Exile, is that pardon and restoration to God's favour are won only by waiting upon Him with all the heart. It was possible, of course, to observe some forms ; to gather at intervals to inquire of the Lord, to keep the Sabbath, and to keep fasts. The first of these practices, out of which the synagogue probably took its rise, is noted by our prophet or some other,<sup>3</sup> and he enforces Sabbath-keeping with words, that add the blessing of prophecy

<sup>1</sup> Mr. St. Chad Boscawen's lectures of 1889-1900, of which I have seen only the reports in the *Manchester Guardian*.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. lviii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ch. lviii. 13, 14.

to the law's ancient sanction of that institution. Four annual fasts were instituted in memory of the dark days of Jerusalem—the day of the beginning of Nebuchadrezzar's siege in the tenth month, the day of the capture in the fourth month, the day of the destruction in the fifth month, and the day of Gedaliah's murder in the tenth month. It might have been thought, that solemn anniversaries of a disaster so recent and still unrepaired would be kept with sincerity; but our prophecies illustrate how soon even the most outraged feelings may grow formal, and how on their days of special humiliation, while their captivity was still real, the exiles could oppress their own bondsmen and debtors. But there is no religious practice of this epoch more apparent through our prophecies than the reading of Scripture. Israel's hope was neither in sacrifice, nor in temple, nor in vision nor in lot, but in God's written Word; and when a new prophet arose, like the one we are about to study, he did not appeal for his authorisation, as previous prophets had done, to the fact of his call or inspiration, but it was enough for him to point to some former word of God, and cry, 'See! at last the day has dawned for the fulfilment of that.' Throughout Second Isaiah this is what the anonymous prophet cares to establish—that the facts of to-day fit the promise of yesterday. We shall not understand our great prophecy unless we realise a people rising from fifty years' close study of Scripture, in strained expectation of its immediate fulfilment.

3. The third special feature of the people in exile is their application to commerce. At home the Jews were not largely a commercial people.<sup>1</sup> But the opportunities of their Babylonian residence seem to have started

<sup>1</sup> See vol. i, pp. 292 ff.

them upon those habits, for which, through their longer exile in our era, the name of Jew has become a synonym. If that be so, Jeremiah's advice *to build and plant*<sup>1</sup> is historic, for it means no less than that the Jews should throw themselves into the life of the most trafficking nation of the time. Their increasing wealth proves how they followed this advice,—as well as perhaps such passages as Isa. lv. 2, in which the commercial spirit is reproached for overwhelming the nobler desires of religion. The chief danger, incurred by the Jews from an intimate connection with the commerce of Babylonia, lay in the close relations of Babylonian commerce with Babylonian idolatry. The merchants of Mesopotamia had their own patron gods. In completing business contracts, a man had to swear by the idols,<sup>2</sup> and might have to enter their temples. In Isa. lxxv. 11, probably a post-exilic passage, Jews are blamed *for forsaking Yahweh, and forgetting My holy mountain; preparing a table for Luck, and filling up mixed wine to Fortune*. Here it is more probable that mercantile speculation, rather than any other form of gambling, is intended.

### III

But while all this is certain and needing to be noted about the habits of the mass of the people, what little trace it has left in the best literature of the period! We have already noticed in that the little amount of local colour. The truth is that what we have been trying to describe as Jewish life in Babylon was only a surface over deeps in which the true life of the nation was at work—was volcanically at work. Throughout the Exile the true Jew lived inwardly. *Out of the depths*

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xxix. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Records of the Past*. 1st ser., ix, 95 seq.

*do I cry to Thee, O Lord.* He was the inhabitant not so much of a foreign prison as of his own broken heart. *He sat by the rivers of Babylon ; but he thought upon Sion.* Is it not a proof of what depths in human nature were being stirred, that so little comes to the surface to tell us of the external conditions of those days ? There are no fossils in the strata of the earth, which have been cast forth from her inner fires ; and if we find few traces of contemporary life in these deposits of Israel's history now before us, it is because they date from an age in which the nation was shaken and boiling to its centre.

For if we take the writings of this period—the Book of Lamentations, the Psalms of the Exile, and parts of other books—and put them together, the result is the impression of one of the strangest decompositions of human nature into its elements which the world has ever seen. Suffering and sin, recollection, remorse and revenge, fear and shame and hate—over the confusion of these the Spirit of God broods as over a second chaos, and draws each of them forth in turn upon some articulate prayer. Now it is the crimson flush of shame *our soul is exceedingly filled with contempt.* Now it is the black rush of hate ; for if we would see how hate can rage, we must go to the Psalms of the Exile, which call on the God of vengeance and curse the enemy and dash the little ones against the stones. But the deepest surge of all in that whirlpool of misery was the surge of sin. To change the figure, we see Israel's spirit writhing upward from some pain it but partly understands, crying out, ' What is this that keeps God from hearing and saving me ? '—turning like a wounded beast from the face of its master to its sore again, understanding as no brute could the reason of its plague, till confession after confession breaks away and the penalty is ac-



cepted, and acknowledged guilt seems almost to act as an anodyne to the penalty it explains. *Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? If thou, Yahweh, shouldest mark iniquity, who shall stand?* No wonder, that with such a conscience the Jews occupied the Exile in writing the moral of their delinquent history, or that some of their literature which dates from that time should have remained ever since the world's confessional.

But in this awful experience, there is still another strain, as painful as the rest, but pure and very eloquent of hope—the sense of innocent suffering. We cannot tell the sources, from which this considerable feeling may have gathered during the Exile, any more than we can trace from how many of the upper folds of a valley the tiny rivulets start, which form the stream that issues from its lower end. One of these sources may have been, as we have already suggested, the experience of Jeremiah; others very probably sprang with every individual conscience in the new generation. Children come even to exiles, and although they bear the same pain with the same nerves as their fathers, they do so with a different conscience. The writings of the time dwell much on the sufferings of the children. The consciousness is apparent in them, that souls are born into the wrath of God, as well as banished there. *Our fathers have sinned and are not, and we bear their iniquities.* This experience developed with great force, till Israel felt that she suffered not under God's wrath, but for His sake; and so passed from the conscience of the felon to that of the martyr. But if we are to understand the prophecies we are about to study, we must remember how near akin these two consciences must have been in exiled Israel, and how easy it was for a prophet to speak—as our main prophet does, some-



times with confusing rapidity of exchange—now in the voice of the older and more guilty generation, and now in the voice of the younger and less deservedly punished.

Our survey of the external as well as the internal conditions of Israel in Exile is now finished. It has, I think, included every known feature of their experience in Babylonia, which could possibly illustrate our main prophecy—dated, as we have felt ourselves compelled to date this, from the close of the Exile. Thus, as we have striven to trace, did Israel suffer, learn, grow and hope for fifty years—under Nebuchadrezzar till 561, under his successor Evil-merodach till 559, under Neriglassar till 555, and then under the usurper Nabu-nahid. The last named probably oppressed the Jews more grievously than their previous tyrants, but with the aggravation of their yoke there grew evident, at the same time, the certainty of their deliverance. In 549 Cyrus overthrew the Medes, and became lord of Asia from the Indus to the Halys. In 546 or 545, by the overthrow of Cræsus of Lydia, he extended his conquest to the coasts of the Ionian Sea. From those events his conquest of Babylonia, however much delayed, could only be a matter of time.

It is at this juncture that our main prophecy (chaps. xl-lv) breaks in. Taking for granted Cyrus' sovereignty of the Medes and conquest of Lydia, it still looks forward to his capture of Babylon. Let us, before advancing to its exposition, once more cast a rapid glance over the people, to whom it is addressed, and whom in their half century of waiting for it we have been endeavouring to describe.

*First* and most manifest, they are a People with a Conscience—a people with the most awful and most

articulate conscience that ever before or since exposed a nation's history or tormented a generation with the curse of their own sin and the sin of their fathers. Behind them ages of delinquent life, from the perusal of the record of which, with its regularly recurring moral, they have just risen: the Books of Kings appear to have been finished after the accession of Evil-merodach in 561. Behind them also nearly fifty years of sore punishment for their sins—punishment, which, as their Psalms confess, they at last understand and accept as deserved.

But, *secondly*, they are a People with a Great Hope. With their awful consciousness of guilt, they have the assurance that their punishment has its limits; that, to quote chap. xl. ver. 2, it is a *set period of service*: a former word of God having fixed it at not more than seventy years, and having promised the return of the nation thereafter to their own land.

And, *thirdly*, they are a People with a Great Opportunity. History is at last beginning to set towards the vindication of their hope: Cyrus, the master of the age, is moving rapidly, irresistibly down upon their tyrants.

But, *fourthly*, in face of all their hope and opportunity, they are a People Disorganised, Distracted, and very Impotent—*worms and not men*, as they describe themselves. The generation of the tried and responsible leaders of the days of their independence are all dead, for *flesh is like grass*; no public institutions remain in their midst such as ever in the most hopeless periods of the past proved a rallying-point of their scattered forces. There is no king, temple, nor city; nor is there any great personality visible to draw their little groups together, marshal them, and lead them forth behind him. Their one hope is in the Word of

God, for which they *wait more than they that watch for the morning*; and the one duty of their nameless prophets is to persuade them, that this Word has at last come to pass, and, in the absence of king, Messiah, priest, and great prophet, is able to lift them to the opportunity that God's hand has opened before them, and to the accomplishment of their redemption.

Upon Israel, with such a Conscience, such a Hope, such an Opportunity, and such an unaided Reliance on God's bare Word, that Word at last broke in a chorus of voices.

Of these the first, as was most meet, spoke pardon to the people's conscience and the proclamation that their set period of warfare was accomplished; the second announced that circumstances and the politics of the world, hitherto adverse, would be made easy to their return; the third bade them, in their bereavement of earthly leaders, and their own impotence, find their eternal confidence in God's Word; while the fourth lifted them, as with one heart and voice, to herald the certain return of Yahweh, at the head of His people, to His own City, and His quiet, shepherdly rule of them on their own land.

These herald voices form the prologue to our prophecy, chap. xl. I-II, to which we will now turn.

BOOK II

THE LORD'S DELIVERANCE



## CHAPTER V

### THE PROLOGUE: THE FOUR HERALD VOICES

#### ISAIAH XL. 1-11

**I**T is only Voices which we hear in this Prologue. No forms can be discerned, whether of men or angels, and it is even difficult to make out the direction from which the Voices come. Only one thing is certain—that they break the night, that they proclaim the end of a long but fixed period, during which God has punished and forsaken His people. At first, the persons addressed are prophets, that they may speak to the people (vv. 1, 2) ; but afterwards Jerusalem as a whole is summoned to publish the good tidings (ver. 9). This interchange between a part of the people and the whole—this commission to prophesy, made with one breath to some of the nation for the sake of the rest, and with the next breath to the entire nation—is a habit of our prophet to which we shall soon get accustomed. How natural and characteristic it is, is proved by its appearance in these very first verses.

The beginning of the good tidings is Israel's pardon ; yet it seems not to be the people's return to Palestine which is announced in consequence of this, so much as their God's return to them. *Prepare ye the way of Yahweh, make straight a highway for our God. Behold the Lord Yahweh will come.* We may, however, take



*the way of Yahweh in the wilderness* to mean what it means in the sixty-eighth Psalm,—His going forth before His people and leading of them back ; while the promise that He will come to *shepherd His flock* (ver. 11) is, of course, the promise that He will resume the government of Israel upon their own land. There can be no doubt, therefore, that this chapter was meant for the people at the close of their captivity in Babylon. But do not let us miss the pathetic fact, that Israel is addressed not in her actual shape of a captive people in a foreign land, but under the name and aspect of her far-away, desolate country. In these verses Israel is *Jerusalem, Şion, the cities of Judah*. Such designations do not prove, as a few critics have rather pedantically supposed, that the writer of the verses lived in Judah and addressed himself to what was under his eyes. It is not the vision of a Jew at home that has determined the choice of these names, but the desire and the dream of a Jew abroad : that extraordinary passion, which, however distant might be the land of his exile, ever filled the Jew's eyes with Şion, caused him to feel the ruin and forsakenness of his Mother more than his own servitude, and swept his patriotic hopes, across his own deliverance and return, to the greater glory of her restoration.<sup>1</sup> There is nothing, therefore, to prevent us taking for granted, as we did in the previous chapter, that the speaker or speakers of these verses stood among the exiles themselves ; but who they were—men or angels, prophets or scribes—is lost in the darkness out of which their music breaks.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 46–48.

<sup>2</sup> From the sequence of the voices, it would seem that we had in ch. xl not a mere collection of anonymous prophecies arranged by an editor, but one complete prophecy by the author of most of Isa. xl–lxvi, set in the dramatic form which obtains through the other chapters.

Nevertheless the prophecy is not anonymous. By these impersonal voices a personal revelation is made. The prophets may be nameless, but the Deity who speaks through them speaks as already known and acknowledged : *My people, sayeth your God.*

This is a point, which, though it takes for its expression no more than these two little pronouns, we must not hurriedly pass over. All the prophecy we are about to study may be said to hang from these pronouns. They are the hinges, on which the door of this new temple of revelation swings open before the long-expectant people. And, in fact, such a conscience and sympathy as these little words express form the necessary premise of all revelation. Revelation implies a previous knowledge of God, and cannot work upon men, except there already exist in them the sense that they and God somehow belong to each other. This sense need be neither pure, nor strong, nor articulate. It may be the most selfish and cowardly of guilty fears,—Jacob's dread as he drew near Esau, whom he had treacherously supplanted,—the vaguest of ignorant desires, the Athenians' worship of the Unknown God. But, whatever it is, the angel comes to wrestle with it, the apostle is sent to declare it ; revelation in some form takes it as its premise and starting-point. This previous sense of God may also be fuller than in the cases just cited. Take our Lord's own illustration. Upon the prodigal in the strange country there surged again the far-ebbed memory of his home and childhood, of his years of familiarity with a Father ; and it was this tide which carried back his penitent heart within the hearing of his Father's voice, and the revelation of the love that became his new life. Now Israel, also in a far-off land, were borne upon the recollection of home and of life in the favour of their God. We have seen

with what knowledge of Him and from what relations with Him they were banished. To the men of the Exile God was already a Name and an Experience, and because that Name was *The Righteous*, and that Experience was all grace and promise, these men waited for His Word more than they that wait for the morning ; and when at length the Word broke from the long darkness and silence, they received it, though its bearers might be unseen and unaccredited, because they recognised and acknowledged in it Himself. He who spoke was *their God*, and they were *His people*. This conscience and sympathy was all the title or credential which the revelation required. It is, therefore, not too much to say, as we have said, that the two pronouns in chap. xl., ver. 1, are the necessary premise of the whole prophecy which that verse introduces.

With this introduction we may now take up the four herald voices of the Prologue. Whatever may have been their original relation to one another, whether or not they came to Israel by different messengers, they are arranged (as we saw at the close of the previous chapter) in manifest order and progress of thought,<sup>1</sup> and they meet in due succession the experiences of Israel at the close of the Exile. For the first of them (vv. 1 and 2) gives the *subjective assurance* of the coming redemption : it is the Voice of Grace. The second (vv. 3-5) proclaims the *objective reality* of that redemption : it may be called the Voice of Providence, or—to use the name by which our prophecy loves to entitle the just and victorious providence of God—the Voice of Righteousness. The third (vv. 6-8) uncovers the

<sup>1</sup> Though Duhm, Marti, Cheyne, and Box remove the third in the present order, vv. 6-8 to after the fourth, 9-11. But their reasons are not convincing. The two Voices, vv. 3 and 6, naturally come together,

pledge and earnest of the redemption : in the weakness of men this shall be the Word of God. While the fourth (vv. 9-11) is the Proclamation of the Lord's restored kingdom, when He cometh as a shepherd to shepherd His people. To this progress and climax the music of the passage forms a perfect accompaniment.<sup>1</sup> It would be difficult to find in any language lips that first more softly woo the heart, and then take to themselves so brave a trumpet of challenge and assurance. The opening is upon a few short pulses of music, which steal from heaven as gently as the first ripples of light in a cloudless dawn—

Năhămu, năhămu 'ammi :

*Comfort ye, comfort ye my people :*

Dabbëru 'al-lev Yerushālaîm.

*Speak ye upon the heart of Jerusalem.*<sup>2</sup>

But then the trumpet-tone breaks forth, *Call unto her* ; and on that high key the music stays, sweeping with the second voice across hill and dale like a company of swift horsemen, stooping with the third for a while to the elegy upon the withered grass, but then recovering itself, braced by all the strength of the Word of God, to peal from tower to tower with the fourth, upon the cry, *Behold, the Lord cometh*, till it sinks almost from sound to sight, and yields us, as from the surface of still waters, that sweet reflection of the twenty-third Psalm with which the Prologue concludes.

<sup>1</sup> The metre of vv. 1, 2, 9-11 is clearly that of the Hebrew *Ḳinah* or *Elegy*, with (as frequently) some lines longer than usual ; vv. 3, 4 and 6-8 are in a different measure. Duhm, and others after him, would alter the order of the lines in 3, 4 so as to reduce them also to the strict *Ḳinah* measure.

<sup>2</sup> Every one who appreciates the music of the original will agree how incomparably Handel has interpreted it in those pulses of music with which his *Messiah* opens.

- xl. 1. *Comfort ye, comfort ye My people,  
Sayeth your God.*  
2. *Speak home to the heart of Jerusalem  
And call to her :*

*That fulfilled is her warfare,  
Absolved her guilt,  
That she hath gotten from Yahweh's hand  
Double for all her sins.*

This first voice, with the music of which our hearts have been thrilled ever since we can remember, speaks twice : first in a whisper, then in a call—the whisper of the Lover and the call of the Lord. *Speak ye home to the heart of Jerusalem, and call unto her.*

Now Jerusalem lay in ruins, a city through whose breached walls all the winds of heaven blew mournfully across her forsaken floors. And the *heart of Jerusalem* which was with her people in exile, was like the city—broken and defenceless. In that far-off, unsympathetic land it lay open to the alien ; tyrants forced their idols upon it, the peoples tortured it with their jests.

*For they that led us captive required of us songs,  
And they that wasted us required of us mirth.*

But observe how gently the Divine Beleaguerer approaches, how softly He bids His heralds plead by the gaps, through which the oppressor has forced his idols and his insults. Of all human language they might use, God bids His messengers take and plead with the words with which a man will plead at a maiden's heart, knowing that he has nothing but love to offer as right of entrance, and waiting until love and trust come out to welcome him. *Speak ye*, says the original literally, *on to*, or *up against*, or *up round the heart of*



*Jerusalem*,—a forcible expression, like the German ‘An das Herz,’ or the sweet Scottish, ‘It cam’ up roond my heart,’ and perhaps best rendered into English by the phrase, *Speak home to the heart*.. It is the ordinary Hebrew expression for wooing. As from man to woman when he wins her, the Old Testament uses it several times.<sup>1</sup> To *speak home to the heart* is to use language in which authority and argument are both ignored, and love works her own inspiration. While the haughty Babylonian planted by force his idols, while the folly and temptations of heathendom surged recklessly in, God Himself, the Creator of this broken heart, its Husband and Inhabitant of old,<sup>2</sup> stood lowly by its breaches, pleading in love the right to enter. But when entrance has been granted, see how He bids His heralds change their voice and disposition. The suppliant lover, being received, assumes possession and defence, and they, who were first bid whisper as beggars by each unguarded breach, now leap upon the walls to call from the accepted Lord of the city: *Fulfilled is thy time of service, absolved thy guilt, received hast thou of Yahweh’s hand double for all thy sins*.

Now this is no mere rhetorical figure. This is the abiding attitude and aim of the Almighty towards men. God’s target is our heart. His revelation, whatever of law or threat it send before, is, in its own superlative clearness and urgency, Grace. It comes to man by way of the heart; not at first by argument addressed to the intellect, nor by appeal to experience, but by the sheer strength of a love laid *on to the heart*. It is, to begin with, a subjective thing. Is revelation, then, entirely a subjective assurance? Do the pardon and

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxxiv. 3, etc.; also Gen. l. 21, of Joseph to his brethren, a parallel as here to the verb *comfort*.

<sup>2</sup> See ch. liv, where this figure is developed with great beauty.



peace which it proclaims remain only feelings of the heart, without anything to correspond to them in real fact? By no means; for these Jews the revelation now whispered to their heart will actually take shape in providences of the most concrete kind. A voice will immediately call, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord*, and the way will be prepared. Babylon will fall; Cyrus will let Israel go; their release will appear—most concrete of things!—in ‘black and white’ on a Persian state-document. Yet, before these events happen and become part of His people’s experience, God desires first to convince His people by the sheer urgency of His love. Before He displays His Providence, He will speak in the power and evidence of His Grace. Afterwards, His prophets shall appeal to outward facts; we shall find them in succeeding chapters arguing both with Israel and the heathen on grounds of reason and the facts of history. But, in the meantime, let them only feel that in His Grace they have something for the heart of men, which, striking home, shall be its own evidence and force.

Thus God adventures His Word forth by nameless and unaccredited men upon no other authority than the Grace, with which it is fraught for the heart of His people. The illustration, which this affords of the method and evidence of Divine revelation, is obvious. Let us, with all the strength of which we are capable, emphasise the fact that our prophecy—which is full of the materials for an elaborate theology, which contains the most detailed apologetic in the whole Bible, and displays the most glorious prospect of man’s service and destiny—takes its source and origin from a simple revelation of Grace and the subjective assurance of this in the heart of those to whom it is addressed. This proclamation of Grace is as characteristic and

dominant in Second Isaiah, as we saw the proclamation of conscience in chap. i to be characteristic of the First Isaiah. Not unjustly has the prophet of xl-lv been called The Evangelist of the Old Covenant.

Before we pass on, let us look for a moment at the contents of this Grace, in the three clauses of the prophet's cry: *Fulfilled is her warfare, absolved her guilt, gotten hath she of Yahweh's hand double for all her sins.* The very grammar here is eloquent of grace. The emphasis lies on the three predicates, which ought to stand in translation, as they do in the original, at the beginning of each clause. Prominence is given, not to the warfare, nor to the guilt, nor to the sins, but to this, that *accomplished* is the warfare, *absolved* the guilt, *sufficiently expiated* the sins. It is a great AT LAST which these clauses peal forth; but an At Last whose tone is not so much inevitableness as undeserved grace. The term translated warfare means *period of military service, appointed term of conscription*; and the application is apparent when we remember that the Exile had been fixed, by the Word of God through Jeremiah, to a definite number of years. *Absolved* is the passive of a verb meaning to *pay off what is due*.<sup>1</sup> But the third clause is especially gracious. It declares that Israel has suffered of punishment more than double enough to atone for her sins.<sup>2</sup> This is not a way of regarding either sin or atonement, which, theologically speaking, is accurate. What of its relation to our Articles, that man cannot give satisfaction for his sins by the work of his hands or the pains of his flesh? No: it might scarcely pass some of our creeds to-day. But all the more, that it thus bursts forth from strict terms of dealing, does it reveal the generosity of Him

<sup>1</sup> Lev. xxvi. 41, 43, with *guilt* as here.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps in allusion to Jer. xvi. 18.

who utters it. How full of pity God is, to take so much account of the sufferings sinners have brought upon themselves ! How full of grace to reckon those sufferings *double the sins* that had earned them ! It is, as when we have seen gracious men make us a free gift, and in their courtesy insist that we have worked for it. It is grace masked by grace. As the height of art is to conceal art, so the height of grace is to conceal grace, which it does in this verse.

Such is the Voice of Grace. But,

- xl. 3. *Voice of one calling : In the wilderness prepare  
The way of Yahweh !  
Make straight<sup>1</sup> through the desert  
A road for our God !*
4. *Every mountain and hill be brought low,<sup>2</sup>  
Every valley be lifted,<sup>2</sup>  
The steep become level,  
The crags a vale.*
5. *And revealed be the glory of Yahweh,  
And see it shall all flesh together,<sup>3</sup>  
For the mouth of Yahweh hath spoken.<sup>4</sup>*

The relation of this Voice to the previous one has already been indicated. This is the witness of Providence following upon the witness of Grace. Religion is a matter in the first place between God and the

<sup>1</sup> For *make straight*, Haupt, on an Arabic analogy, renders *beat*, i.e., with the feet, tramp (*American Journal of Philology*, 1925, 199 ff.).

<sup>2</sup> With Duhm, Cheyne, and Marti I have transposed these in order to preserve the regularity of the metre ; yet with hesitation, as I do not suppose that the Hebrews were so anxious for metrical regularity as their modern editors are.

<sup>3</sup> LXX, *the salvation of God*.

<sup>4</sup> Ver. 5 is regarded by Duhm, Cheyne, and Marti as a later gloss ; but Budde's argument for retaining it as original is sound.

heart ; but religion does not, as many mock, remain an inward feeling. The secret relation between God and His people issues into substantial fact, visible to all men. History vindicates faith ; Providence executes Promise ; Righteousness follows Grace. So, as the first Voice was spoken *to the heart*, this second is for the hands and feet and active will. *Prepare ye the way of the Lord*. If you, poor captives as you are, begin to act upon the grace whispered in your trembling hearts, the world will show the result. All things will come round to your side. A levelled empire, an altered world—across those your way shall lie clear to Jerusalem. You shall go forth in the sight of all men, and future generations looking back shall praise this manifest wonder of your God. *The glory of Yahweh shall be revealed, and see it shall all flesh together*.

On which words, how can our hearts help rising from the comfort of grace to the sense of mastery over this world, to the assurance of heaven itself ? History must come round to the side of faith—as it has come round not in the case of Jewish exiles only, but where-soever such a faith as theirs has been repeated. History must come round to the side of faith, if men will only obey the second as well as the first of these herald voices. But we are too ready to listen to the Word of the Lord, without seeking to prepare His way. We are satisfied with the personal comfort of our God ; we are contented to be forgiven and—oh mockery !—left alone. But the word of God will not leave us alone, and not for comfort only is it spoken. On the back of the voice, which sets our heart right with God, comes the voice to set the world right, and no man is godly who has not heard both. Are we timid and afraid that facts will not correspond to our faith ? Nay, but as God reigneth they shall, if only

we put to our hands and make them ; *all flesh shall see it*, if we will but *prepare the way of the Lord*.

Have we only ancient proofs of this ? On the contrary, God has done like wonders within the lives of those of us who are yet young. Within our memory, more than one people has appealed from the convictions of her heart to the arbitrament of history, and appealed not in vain. When the citizens of the Northern States of the American Republic, not content as they might have been with their protests against slavery, rose to vindicate these by the sword, they faced, humanly speaking, a risk as great as that to which Jew was ever called by the word of God. Their own brethren were against them ; the world stood aloof. But even so, unaided by united patriotism and as much dismayed as encouraged by the opinions of civilisation, they rose to the issue on the strength of conscience and their hearts. They rose and they conquered. Slavery was abolished. What had been but the conviction of a few men, became the surprise, the admiration, the consent of the whole world. *The glory of the Lord was revealed, and all flesh saw it together*. One might say the same of the unanimity with which Great Britain, on the strength of moral convictions, rose to the venture of war in 1914, and was ultimately vindicated.

3. But the shadow of death falls on everything, even on the way of the Lord. By 550 B.C.—that is, after thirty-eight years of exile—nearly all the strong men of Israel's days of independence must have been taken away. Death had been busy with the exiles for more than a generation. There was no longer any human representative of Yahweh to rally the people's trust ; the monarchy, each possible Messiah who in turn held it, the priesthood, and the prophethood—whose great



personalities so often took the place of Israel's official leaders—had all alike disappeared. It was little wonder, then, that a nation accustomed to be led, not by ideas like us Westerns, but by personages, who were to it the embodiment of its God's will and guidance, should have been cast into despair by the call, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord*. What sort of a call was this for a people, whose strong men were like things uprooted and withered! How could one be, with any heart, a herald of the Lord to such a people!

xl. 6. *A voice saying, Call!*<sup>1</sup>

*And I*<sup>2</sup> *said, What shall I call?*

*All flesh is grass,*

*And its grace*<sup>3</sup> *like a wild-flower;*

7. *Withers the grass, fades the flower*

*When the breath of Yahweh blows on it.*

[*Surely grass is the people!*]<sup>4</sup>

8. *Withers the grass, fades the flower,*

*But the word of our God stands for ever.*

Everything human may perish; the day may be past of the prophets, of the priests—of the King in his beauty, who was vicegerent of God. But the people have God's word; when all their leaders have fallen, and every visible authority for God is taken away, this shall be their rally and their confidence.

All this is too like the actual experience of Israel in Exile not to be the true interpretation of this third, stern Voice. Their political and religious institutions, which had so often proved the initiative of a new movement, or served as a bridge to carry the nation across disaster

<sup>1</sup> The technical word to *preach* or *proclaim*.

<sup>2</sup> So LXX for Heb. *he*.

<sup>3</sup> By substituting similar letters some read *glory* with LXX, others *strength*.

<sup>4</sup> A gloss according to most moderns.



to a larger future, were not in existence. Nor does any Moses, as in Egypt of old, rise to visibleness from among his obscure people, impose his authority upon them, marshal them, and lead them out behind him to freedom. What we see is a scattered and a leaderless people, stirred in their shadow, as a ripe cornfield is stirred by the breeze before dawn—stirred in their shadow by the ancient promises of God, and everywhere breaking out at the touch of these into psalms and prophecies of hope. We see them expectant of redemption, we see them resolved to return, we see them carried across the desert to Sion, and from first to last it is the word of God that is their inspiration and assurance.

They, who formerly had rallied round the Ark or the Temple, or who had risen to the hope of a glorious Messiah, do not now speak of all these, but their *hope*, they tell us, *is in His word*; it is the instrument of their salvation, and their destiny is to be its evangelists.

4. To this high destiny the fourth Voice now summons them by a vivid figure.

xl. 9. *Up a high hill get thee up,  
Heraldess, Sion!  
Lift up with strength thy voice,  
Heraldess, Jerusalem!  
[Lift up] fear not, tell the cities of Judah,<sup>1</sup>  
Behold your God.*

10. *Lo, the Lord<sup>2</sup> Yahweh cometh in might,<sup>3</sup>  
His Arm rules for Him.  
Lo, His reward is with Him,  
His meed before Him.*

<sup>1</sup> Unduly long line perhaps, though not certainly to be shortened by omitting the repeated *lift up*.

<sup>2</sup> Some omit *the Lord* as unduly loading the line.

<sup>3</sup> *In might*, LXX, *Targ. Vulg.*

II. *Like a shepherd His flock He tends,  
With His Arm He gathers.  
The lambs in His bosom He bears,  
And those that suckle He gently leads.*<sup>1</sup>

The title which I have somewhat awkwardly rendered *Heraldess*—yet English yields no fitter word for it—is the feminine participle of a verb meaning to *thrill*, or *give joy, by good news*. It is used to tell news of a birth, but mostly of bearing tidings of victory or peace. In Psalm lxviii. 11, *the women who publish victory to the great host* is the phrase for the members of those female choirs, who, like Miriam and her maidens, celebrated a triumph in face of the army, or came forth from the city to hail the returning conqueror, as the daughters of Jerusalem hailed Saul and David. As such a chorister, Sion is now summoned to proclaim Yahweh's arrival at the gates of the cities of Judah.

The verses from *Behold, your God*, to the end of the Prologue are the song of the heraldess. Do not their mingled martial and pastoral strains exactly suit the case of the Return? For this is an expedition, on which the nation's Champion has gone forth, not to lead His enemies captive to His gates, but that He may gather His people home. Not mailed men, in the pride of a victory they have helped to win, march in behind Him, —*armour and tumult and the garment rolled in blood*,—but a herd of mixed and feeble folk, with babes and women, in need of carriage and gentle leading, wander wearily back. And, therefore, in the mouth of the heraldess the figure changes from a warrior-king to the Good Shepherd. *With His right arm He gathers them*,

<sup>1</sup> Genesis xxxiii. 13.

*and the lambs in His bosom He bears. Ewe-mothers He gently leads.* How true a picture, and how much it recalls! Fifty years before, the exiles left their home (as we can see to this day upon Assyrian sculptures) in closely-driven companies, fettered, and with the urgency upon them of grim soldiers, who marched at intervals in their ranks to keep up the pace, and who tossed the weaklings impatiently aside. But now, see the slow and loosely-gathered bands wander back, just as quickly as the weakest feel strength to travel, and without any force or any guidance save that of their Almighty, Unseen Shepherd.

We are now able to appreciate the dramatic unity of this Prologue. How perfectly it gathers into its four Voices the whole course of Israel's redemption: the first assurance of Grace whispered to the heart, co-operation with Providence, confidence in God's bare Word, the full Return and the Restoration of the City.

But its climax is undoubtedly the honour it lays upon the whole people to be publishers of the good news of God. Of this it speaks with trumpet tones. All Jerusalem must be a herald-people. And how could Israel help owning the constraint and inspiration to so high an office, after so heartfelt an experience of grace, so evident a redemption, so glorious a proof of the power of the Word of God? To have the heart thus filled with grace, to have the will enlisted in so Divine a work, to have known the almightiness of the Divine Word when everything else failed—after such an experience, who would not be able to preach the good news of God, to foretell, as our prophet bids Israel foretell, the coming of the Presence and Kingdom of God—the day when the Lord's flock shall be perfect and none wanting, when society, though still weary and weak and mortal, shall have no stragglers nor outcasts.

O God, so fill us with Thy grace and enlist us in Thy work, so manifest the might of Thy word to us, that the ideal of Thy perfect kingdom may shine as bright and near to us as to Thy prophet of old, and that we may become its inspired preachers and ever labour in its hope. Amen.

## CHAPTER VI

### GOD: A SACRAMENT

#### ISAIAH XL. 12-31

SUCH are the Four Voices which herald the day of Israel's redemption. They are scarcely silent, before the Sun Himself uprises, and horizon after horizon of His empire is displayed to the eyes of His starved and waiting people. From the prologue of the prophecy, in chap. xl. 1-11, we advance to the presentation, in chaps. xl. 12-xli, of its primary and governing truth—the sovereignty and omnipotence of God, the God of Israel.

We may well call this truth the sun of the new day which Israel is about to enter. For as it is the sun which makes the day, and not the day which reveals the sun; so it is God, supreme and almighty, who interprets, predicts, and controls His people's history, and not their history, which, in its gradual evolution, is to make God's sovereignty and omnipotence manifest to their experience. Let us clearly understand this. The prophecy, which we are about to follow, is an argument not so much from history to God as from God to history. Israel already have their God; and it is because He is what He is, and what they ought to know Him to be,<sup>1</sup> that they are bidden believe that

<sup>1</sup> See xl. 21, *Do ye not know?*

their future shall take a certain course. The prophet begins with God, and everything follows from God. All that in these chapters lends light or force, all that interprets the history of to-day and fills to-morrow with hope, fact and promise alike, the captivity of Israel, the appearance of Cyrus, the fall of Babylon, Israel's redemption, the extension of their mission to the ends of the earth, the conversion of the Gentiles, the equipment, discipline, and triumph of the Servant Himself,—we may even say the expanded geography of our prophet, the countries which for the first time emerge from the distant west within the vision of a Hebrew seer,—all are due to that primary truth about God with which we are now presented. It is God's sovereignty which brings such far-off things into the interest of Israel ; it is God's omnipotence which renders such impossible things practical. And as with the subjects, so with the style of the following chapters. The prophet's style is throughout the effect of his perfect and brilliant monotheism. It is the thought of God which everywhere kindles his imagination. His most splendid passages are those, in which he soars to some lofty vision of the Divine glory in creation or history ; while his frequent sarcasm and ridicule owe their effectiveness to the sudden scorn, with which, from such a view, scattering epigrams the while, he sweeps down upon the heathen's poor images, or Israel's grudging thoughts of their God. The breadth and the force of his imagination, the sweep of his rhetoric, the intensity of his scorn, may all be traced to his sense of God's sovereignty, and are the signs to us of how absolutely he was possessed by this as his main and governing truth.

This, then, being the sun of Israel's coming day, we may call what we find in chap. xl. 12-xli the sunrise—



the full revelation and uplifting on our sight of this original gospel of the prophet. It is addressed to two classes of men ; in chap. xl. 12-31 to Israel, but in chap. xli (for the greater part, at least) to the Gentiles. In dealing with these two classes the prophet makes a great difference. To Israel he recalls their God, as it were, in sacrament ; but to the Gentiles he urges God's claims in challenge and argument. It is to the past that he summons Israel, and to what they ought to know already about their God ; it is to the future, to history yet unmade, that he proposes to the Gentiles they should together appeal, in order to see whether his God or their Gods are the true Deity. In this chapter we shall deal with the first of these—God in sacrament.

The fact is familiar to all, that the Old Testament nowhere feels the necessity of proving the existence of God. That would have been a proof unintelligible to those to whom its prophets addressed themselves. In the time when the Old Testament came to him, man as little doubted the existence of God as he doubted his own life. But as life sometimes burned low, needing replenishment, so faith would grow despondent and morbid, needing to be led away from objects which only starved it, or produced, as idolatry did, the veriest delirium of a religion. A man had to get his faith lifted from the thoughts of his own mind and the works of his own hand, to be borne upon and nourished by the works of God,—to kindle with the sunrise, to broaden out by the sight of the firmament, to deepen as he faced the spaces of night,—and win calmness and strength to think life into order as he looked forth upon the marshalled hosts of heaven, having all the time no doubt that the God who created and guided

these was his God. Therefore, when psalmist or prophet calls Israel to lift their eyes to the hills, or to behold how the heavens declare the glory of God, or to listen to that unbroken tradition, which day passes to day and night to night, of the knowledge of the Creator, it is not proofs to doubting minds which he offers : it is spiritual nourishment to hungry souls. These are not arguments—they are sacraments. When we Christians go to the Lord's Supper, we go not to have the Lord proved to us, but to feed upon a life and a love of whose existence we are past all doubt. Our sacrament fills all the mouths by which needy faith is fed—such as outward sight, and imagination, and memory, and wonder, and love. Now very much what the Lord's Supper is to us for fellowship with God and feeding upon Him, that were the glory of the heavens, and the everlasting hills, and the depth of the sea, and the vision of the stars to the Hebrews. They were the sacraments of God. By them faith was fed, and the spirit of man entered into the enjoyment of God, whose existence indeed he had never doubted, but whom he had lost, forgotten, or misunderstood.

Now it is as such a minister of sacrament to God's starved and disheartened people that our prophet appears in chap. xl. 12-31.

There were three elements in Israel's starvation. Firstly, for nearly fifty years they had been deprived of the accustomed ordinances of religion. Temple and altar had perished ; the common praise and the national religious fellowship were impossible ; the traditional symbols of the faith lay far out of sight ; there was at best only a precarious ministry of the Word. But, in the second place, this famine of the Word and of Sacraments was aggravated by the fact that history had gone against the people. To the baser minds

among them, always ready to grant their allegiance to success, this could only mean that the gods of the heathen had triumphed over Yahweh. It is little wonder that such experience, assisted by the presentation, at every turn in their ways, of idols and a splendid idol-worship, the fashion and delight of the populations through whom they were mixed, should have tempted many Jews to feed their starved hearts at the shrines of their conquerors' gods. But the result could only be the further atrophy of their religious nature. It has been held as a reason for the worship of idols that they excite the affection and imagination of the worshipper. They do no such thing: they starve and they stunt these. The image reacts upon the imagination, infects it with its own narrowness and poverty, till man's noblest creative faculty becomes the slave of its own poor toy. But, thirdly, if the loftier spirits in Israel refused to believe that their God, exalted in righteousness, could be less than the brutal deities whom Babylon vaunted over Him, they were flung back upon the sorrowful conviction that their God had cast them off; that He had retreated from the patronage of so unworthy a people into the veiled depths of His own nature. Then upon that heaven, from which no answer came to those who were once its favourites, they cast we can scarcely tell what reflection of their own weary and spiritless estate. As, standing over a city by night, you will see the majestic darkness above stained and distorted into shapes of pain or wrath by the upcast of the city's broken, murky lights, so many of the nobler exiles saw upon the blank, unanswering heaven a horrible mirage of their own trouble and fear. Their weariness said, He is weary; the ruin of their national life reflected itself as the frustration of His purposes; their accusing conscience saw the

darkness of His counsel relieved only by streaks of wrath.

But none of these tendencies in Israel went so far as to deny that there was a God, or even to doubt His existence. This, as we have said, was nowhere yet the temptation of mankind. When the Jew lapsed from that true faith, which we have seen his nation carry into exile, he fell into one of the two tempers just described—devotion to false gods in the shape of idols, or despondency consequent upon false notions of the true God. It is against these tempers, one after another, that chap. xl. 12-31 is directed. And so we understand why, though the prophet is here declaring the basis and spring of all his subsequent prophecy, he does not adopt the method of abstract argument. He is not treating with men, who have had no true knowledge of God in the past, or whose intellect questions God's reality. He is treating with men, who have a national heritage of truth about God, but they have forgotten it ; who have hearts full of religious affection, but it has been betrayed ; who have a devout imagination, but it has been starved ; who have hopes, but they are faint unto death. He will recall to them their heritage, rally their shrinking convictions by the courage of his own faith, feed their hunger after righteousness<sup>1</sup> by a new hope set to noble music, and display to the imagination that has been stunted by so long looking upon the face of idols the wide horizons of Divine glory in earth and heaven.

His style corresponds to his purpose. He does not syllogise ; he exhorts, recalls, and convicts by assertion. The passage is a series of questions, rallies, and promises. *Hast thou not known ? hast thou not heard ?* is his

<sup>1</sup> That is in the sense in which our prophet uses the word, of salvation. See ch. xiv of this volume.

chief note. Instead of arranging facts in history or nature as in themselves a proof for God, he mentions them only by way of provoking inward recollections. His sharp questions are as hooks to draw from his hearers' hearts their timid and starved convictions, that he may nourish these upon the sacramental glories of nature and of history.

Such a purpose and style trust little to method, and it would be useless to search for any *strict* division of strophes in the passage.<sup>1</sup> The following, however, is a manifest division of subject, according to the two tempers to which the prophet had to appeal. Verses 12-25, and perhaps 26, are addressed to the idolatrous Jews. But in 26 there is a transition to the despair of the nobler hearts in Israel, who, though they continued to believe in the One True God, imagined that He had abandoned them; and to such vv. 27-31 are undoubtedly addressed. The different treatment accorded to the two classes is striking. The former of these the prophet does not call by any title of the people of God; with the latter he pleads by a dear double name that he may win them through every recollection of their gracious past, *Jacob* and *Israel* (ver. 27). Challenge and sarcasm are his style with the idolaters, his language clashing out in bursts too loud and rapid sometimes for the grammar, as in ver. 24; but with the despondent his way is gentle persuasiveness, with music that swells and brightens steadily, passing with-

<sup>1</sup> Some intention of division undoubtedly appears. Notice the double refrain, *To whom will ye liken*, etc., of vv. 18 and 25; and then at equal distance from either occurrence of this challenge the appeal, *Dost thou not know*, etc., vv. 21 and 28. But though these signs of a division appear, the rest is submerged by the strong flood of feeling which rushes too deep and rapid for any hard-and-fast embankments. Metrically, vv. 12-31 appear to fall into these forms: 12-16, three strophes of five lines each (cf. Pss. lxxviii and xcix); 17-31, a series of distichs divisible into pairs.



out a break from the minor key of pleading to the major of glorious promise.

I. AGAINST THE IDOLATERS. Some sarcastic lines upon idols and their manufacture (vv. 19, 20) stand between two majestic declarations of God's glory in nature and in history (vv. 12-17 and 21-24). It is an appeal from the worshippers' images to their imagination.

xl. 12. *Who measured the waters in the hollow of his hand  
And the heavens ruled off with a span ?  
Or compassed the dust of the earth in a tierce,  
And weighed out the mountains in scales  
And the hills on a balance ?*

13. *Who hath determined the mind<sup>1</sup> of Yahweh,  
Or as man of His counsel informed Him ?*

14. *With whom took He counsel, to give Him discern-  
ment,  
To teach Him along the pathway of law<sup>2</sup>  
And shew Him the way of intelligence ?*

15. *Lo, the nations are but as a drop from the bucket,  
And as dust on the balance are reckoned.*

*Lo, the isles<sup>3</sup> as a trifle He lifteth,*

16. *Lebanon is not enough for burning  
Nor its beasts for sacrifice.*

The phrase translated *pathway of law* is literally *path of judgement* or *right* (mishpat), but appears to refer rather to *law* or *order* in Nature than to the moral law ;

<sup>1</sup> LXX nous, rightly rendering here the Heb. ruah, *spirit*.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. adds *and taught Him knowledge*, which is not found in LXX, and breaks the metre.

<sup>3</sup> *Isles* or *coastlands*.



for the parallels throughout the passage are all intellectual and not moral.

- xl. 17. *All the nations are as nothing before Him,  
Less than nothing and waste are they reckoned to  
Him.*

When he has thus soared, he swoops down from the height of his imagination on the images.

18. *Then to whom would ye liken God,  
Or what likeness arrange for Him ?*  
19. *An Image ! A workman has cast it  
And a smelter with gold overlays it*<sup>1</sup>  
xli. 6. *Each brings help to his neighbour,  
And says to his brother, Be strong !*  
7. *So the workman strengthens the smelter,  
The smother with hammer the striker on anvil.  
One says of the solder, 'Tis good,  
And fastens it up with nails.*  
xl. 20. *Whoever is in straits for an offering (?)*<sup>2</sup>  
*Chooses a tree that will not rot,  
And seeks him a cunning workman,  
To fix up an image that will not totter.*<sup>3</sup>

The image shrivels in face of that imagination ; the idol is abolished by laughter. There is here the

<sup>1</sup> Heb. adds *and with chains of silver the smelter*, not found in the LXX, and rightly omitted as disturbing the metre by Duhm, Cheyne, Marti, Box, and Moffatt. But after ver. 19 they bring in ch. xli. 6, 7 as more appropriate here than where these two verses now stand. *Per contra* Budde takes vv. 19, 20 as an intrusion here, unworthy of the prophet's high argument.

<sup>2</sup> A very doubtful line. Duhm, founding on the Targum and LXX, proposes to read *He who would carve an image* ; and in this most moderns follow him.

<sup>3</sup> If an idol leant over or fell that was the worst of omens, as in the case of Dagon.

same intellectual intolerance of images, the same burning sense of the unreasonableness of their worship, which has marked all monotheists, and turned most of them into fierce satirists—Elijah, Mohammed, St. Patrick, Luther, Knox,<sup>1</sup> and even, in his own way, St. Bernard.<sup>2</sup> We hear this laughter from them all. Sometimes it may sound truculent or even brutal, but let us remember what is behind it. When we hear it condemned—as, in the interests of art and imagination, its puritan outbursts have often been condemned—as a barbarian incapacity to sympathise with the æsthetic instincts of man, or to appreciate the influence of a beautiful and elevating cult, we can reply that it was the imagination itself which often inspired both the laughter at, and the breaking of, images; and that, because the iconoclast had a loftier vision of God than the image-maker, he has, on the whole, more really furthered the progress of art than the artists whose works he has destroyed. It is certain, for instance, that no one would exchange the beauties of the prophecy now before us, with its sublime imaginations of God, for all the beauty of all the idols of Babylonia which it consigned to destruction. And we dare to say the same of two other epochs, when the uncompromising zeal of monotheists crushed to the dust the fruits of centuries of Christian art. The Koran is not often

<sup>1</sup> When Knox was a prisoner in France they brought him ‘a painted board, which they called Our Lady, and commanded him to kiss it . . . who, seeing the extremity, took the idol and, advisedly looking about, cast it into the river, and said, “Let Our Lady now save herself; she is light enough, let her learn to swim!” After that was no Scotsman urged with that idolatry’ (Knox’s *History of the Reformation*).

<sup>2</sup> In their treatment of images, St. Bernard’s sermons have much in common with our prophet here. For they describe spiritual progress as the leaving behind of all descriptions of God borrowed from sensuous analogy, and as culminating in the blessed enjoyment (*gustus*) of His glory.

appealed to as a model of poetry, but it contains passages whose imagination of God, broad as the horizon of the desert of its birth, and swift and clear as the desert dawn, may be regarded as infinitely more than compensation—from a purely artistic point of view—for the countless works of Christian ritual and imagery which it inspired the rude cavalry of the desert to trample beneath the hoofs of their horses.<sup>1</sup> And again, if we are to blame the Reformers of Western Christendom for the cruelty with which they lifted their hammers against the carved work of the sanctuary, do not let us forget how much of the spirit of the best modern art is to be traced to their more spiritual and lofty conceptions of God. No one will question how much Milton's imagination owed to his Protestantism, or how much Carlyle's dramatic genius was the result of his Puritan faith. But to the spirit of the Reformation, as it liberated the worshipper's soul from bondage to artificial and ecclesiastical symbols of the Deity, we may also ascribe a large part of the force of that movement towards Nature and the imagination of God in His creation which inspired, for example, Wordsworth's poetry, and those visual sacraments of rainbow, storm, and dawn to which Browning so often lifts our souls from their dissatisfaction with ritual or with argument.

From his sarcasm on the idols our prophet returns to his task of drawing forth Israel's memory and imagination.

<sup>1</sup> Here from the *Ḳoran* are some parallels to our prophet's utterances against other gods: 'What think ye of the gods ye invoke beside Allah. Show me what part of the earth they created.' 'Call now on those whom ye made God's companions . . . they will not answer' (*xxxv.* 38, *xxviii.* 64).

- xl. 21. *Do ye not know ? Do ye not hear ?  
Hath it not from the first been told you ?  
Have ye not understood from earth's foundations ?*
22. *He who is throned o'er the round of the earth  
And her dwellers as grasshoppers,  
He who hath stretched like gauze the heavens,  
And spread them out as a tent to dwell in,*
23. *He who turneth rulers to nothing,  
The judges of earth as waste He hath made,<sup>1</sup>*
24. *Hardly planted are they, hardly sown,  
Yea, hardly their stock strikes root in the ground  
When He bloweth upon them, they wither  
And like stubble the whirlwind carries them off.*
25. *To whom would you liken Me then  
That I match him ? sayeth the Holy.*

This time it is not necessary to suggest the idols ; they are already dissolved by laughter. So the prophet turns to the other class in Israel with whom he has to deal.

2. TO THE DESPAIRERS OF THE LORD. From history we pass back to Nature in ver. 26, which forms a transition—the language growing steadier—from the impetuosity of the address to the idolaters to the serene music of what follows. Rebuke enough has the prophet made. As he now lifts his people's vision to the stars, it is not to shame their idols, but to feed their hearts.

26. *Lift up on high your eyes  
And see Who created these,  
Leading forth by number their host,  
And all of them calleth by name ;  
By abundance of might and strength of power  
Not one is amissing.*

<sup>1</sup> Briggs and Duhm elide this verb.

Under such a night, veiling the confusion of earth only to reveal the majesty and order of heaven, we feel a moment's pause. Then, as the expanding eyes of the exiles gaze on the infinite muster above, the prophet goes on :—

xl. 27. *Why sayest thou, then O Jacob,  
And speakest, O Israel ?  
Hid is my way from Yahweh,  
From my God my right is passed over !*

Why does the prophet point his people to the stars ? Because he is among Israel on that vast Babylonian plain, from whose crowded and confused populations, struggling upon one monotonous level, there is no escape for the heart but to the stars. Think of that plain when Nebuchadrezzar was its tyrant ; of the countless families of men torn from their far homes and crushed through one another upon its surface ; of the ancient liberties trampled in that servitude, of the languages stifled in that Babel, of the many patriotisms set to sigh themselves out into the tyrant's mud and mortar. Ah heaven ! was there a God in thee, that one man could thus crush nations in his vat, as men crushed shell-fish in those days, to dye his imperial purple ? Was there any Providence above, that he could tear peoples from the lands and coasts, where their various gifts and offices for humanity had been developed, and press them to his selfish and monotonous servitude ? In that medley of nations, all upon one level of captivity, Israel was just as lost as the most insignificant tribe ; her history severed, her worship impossible, her language threatened with decay. No wonder, that from the stifling crowd and desperate flatness of it all she cried, *Hidden is my way*

*from the LORD, and from my God my right is passed over.*

But from the flatness and the crowd the stars are visible ; and it was upon the stars that the prophet bade his people feed their hearts. There were order and unfailing guidance ; *for the greatness of His might not one is missing.* And He is your God. Just as visible as those countless stars are, one by one, in the dark heavens, to your eyes looking up, so your lives and fortunes are to His eyes looking down on this Babel of peoples. *He gathereth the outcasts of Israel. . . . He telleth the number of the stars.*<sup>1</sup> And so the prophet goes on earnestly to plead :—

28. *Hast thou not known ? Hast thou not heard ?  
A God everlasting is Yahweh,  
Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He faints not neither grows weary,  
No searching of His understanding.*
29. *Giver of strength to the weary,  
On him of no might He lavisheth power.*
30. *Even the youths may faint and weary,  
And the choice youths utterly fail,*
31. *But who wait on Yahweh shall strength renew :  
They shall put forth pinions like eagles,  
They shall run and not be weary,  
They shall walk and shall not faint.*

Listen ears not for your own sake only, though the music is incomparably sweet ! Listen for the sake of the starved hearts below you to whom you carry the sacraments of hope, whom you lift to feed on the firm pledges of God's omnipotence and unfailing grace.

This chapter began with the assurance to the heart of

<sup>1</sup> Psalm cxlvii. 2, 4.



Israel of their God's will to redeem and restore them. It closes with bidding them take hope in God. Let us again emphasise—for we cannot do so too often if we are to keep ourselves from certain errors of to-day on the subject of Revelation—the nature of this prophecy. It is not a reading-off of history; it is a call from God. No deed has yet been done pointing towards the certainty of Israel's redemption; it is not from facts writ large on the life of their day, that the prophet bids the captives read their Divine discharge. That discharge he brings from God; he bids them find the promise and the warrant of it in their God's character, in their own experience and convictions of what that character is. In order to revive those convictions, he does, it is true, appeal to certain facts, but these facts are not the facts of contemporary history which might reveal to any clear eye, that the current and the drift of politics was setting towards the redemption of Israel. They are facts of nature and facts of general providence, which, as we have said, like sacraments evidence God's power to the pious heart, feed it with the assurance of His grace, and bid it hope in His word, though history should seem to be working quite the other way.

This instance of the method of revelation does not justify two opinions, which prevail at the present day regarding prophecy. In the first place, it proves to us, that those are wrong who, too much infected by the modern temper to judge accurately writers so unsophisticated, describe prophecy as if it were merely a philosophy of history, by which the prophets deduced from their observation of the course of events their idea of God and their forecast of His purposes. The prophets had indeed to do with history; they argued from it, and they appealed to it. The history that was past was full of God's condescension to men, and

shone like Nature's self with sacramental signs of His power and will ; the history that was future was to be His supreme tribunal, and to afford the vindication of the word they claimed to have brought from Him. But still all this—their trust in history and their use of it—was something secondary in the prophetic method. With them God Himself was first ; they came forth from His presence, as they describe it, with the knowledge of His will gained through the communion of their spirits with His Spirit. If they then appealed to past history, it was to illustrate their message ; or to future, it was for vindication of this. But God Himself was the Source and Author if it ; and therefore, before they had facts beneath their eyes to corroborate their promises, they appealed to the people, like our prophet in chap. xl, to *wait on Yahweh*. The day might not yet have dawned so as to let them read the signs of the times. But in the darkness they *hoped in Yahweh*, and borrowed for their starved hearts from the stars above, or other sacrament, some assurance of His unfailing power.

Their God, then, was the source of the prophets' word. His character was its pledge. The prophets were not mere readers from history, but speakers from God.

But the testimony of our chapter to all this enables us also to arrest an opinion about Revelation, which has too hurriedly run off with some Christians, and to qualify it. In the inevitable recoil from the scholastic view of revelation as wholly a series of laws and dogmas and predictions, a number of writers on the subject have of late defined Revelation as a chain of historical acts, through which God uttered His character and will to men. According to this view, Revelation is God manifesting Himself in history, and the Bible is the record of this historical process. Now, while it is true that the Bible is, to a large extent, the

annals and interpretation of the great and small events of a nation's history—of its separation from the rest of mankind, its miraculous deliverances, its growth, its defeats and humiliations, its reforms and its institutions ; in all of which God manifested His character and will—yet the Bible also records a revelation, which preceded these historical deeds ; a revelation the theatre of which was not the national experience, but the consciousness of the individual ; which was recognised and welcomed by choice souls in the secret of their own spiritual life, before it was realised and observed in outward fact ; which was uttered by the prophet's voice and accepted by the people's trust in the dark and the stillness, before the day of the Lord had dawned or there was light to see His purposes at work. In a word, God's revelation to men was very often made clear in their subjective consciousness, before it became manifest in the history about them.

And, for ourselves, let us remember that to this day true religion is as independent of facts as it was with the prophet. True religion is a conviction of the character of God, and a resting upon that alone for salvation. We need nothing more to begin with ; and everything else, in our experience and fortune, helps us only in so far as it makes that primary conviction more clear and certain. Darkness may be over us, and we lonely and starved beneath it. We may be destitute of experience to support our faith ; we may be able to discover nothing in life about us making in the direction of our hopes. Still, let *us wait on the Lord*. It is by bare trust in Him, that we *renew our strength, put forth wings like eagles, run and not weary, walk and not faint*.

*Put forth wings—run—walk !* Is the order correct ? Hope swerves from the edge of so descending a promise,

which seems only to repeat the falling course of nature—that droop, we all know, from short ambitions, through temporary impulsiveness, to the old commonplace and routine. Soaring, running, walking—and is not the next stage, a cynic might ask, standing still ?

On the contrary, it is a natural and a true climax,<sup>1</sup> rising from the easier to the more difficult, from the ideal to the real, from dream to duty, from what can only be the rare occasions of life to what must be life's usual and abiding experience. History followed this course. Did the prophet, as he promised, think of what should really prove to be the fortune of his people during the next few years ?—the great flight of hope, on which we see them rising in their psalms of redemption as on the wings of an eagle ; the zeal and liberality of preparation for departure from Babylon ; the first rush at the Return ; and then the long tramp, day after day, with the slow caravan, at the pace of its most heavily-laden beasts of burden, when *they shall walk and not faint* should indeed seem to them the sweetest part of their God's promise.

Or was it the far longer perspective of Israel's history that bade the prophet follow this descending scale ? The spirit of prophecy was with himself to soar higher than ever before, reaching by truly eagle-flight to a vision of the immediate consummation of Israel's glory : the Isles waiting for Israel's God, the Holy City radiant in His rising, and open with all her gates to the thronging nations ; the true religion flashing from Sion across the world, and the wealth of the world pouring back upon Sion. And some have wondered, and some scoff, that after this vision there should follow centuries of imperceptible progress—five-

<sup>1</sup> Which Duhm and others have blindly missed in eliminating the last couplet of the chapter as an anti-climax.

and-a-half centuries of preparation for the coming of the Promised Servant ; and then—Israel, indeed gone forth over the world, but only in small groups, living upon the grudging and fitful tolerance of the great centres of Gentile civilisation. The prophet anticipates all this, when he places the *walking* after the *soaring* and the *running*. When he says last, and most impressively, of his people's fortunes, that they *shall walk and not faint*, he has perhaps just those long centuries in view, when, instead of a nation of enthusiasts taking humanity by storm, we see small bands of pioneers pushing their way from city to city by the slow methods of ancient travel,—Damascus, Antioch, Tarsus, Iconium, Ephesus, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth and Rome,—everywhere that Paul and the missionaries of the Cross found a pulpit and a congregation ready to hear the Gospel ; toiling from day to day at their own trades, serving the alien for wages, here and there founding a synagogue, now and then completing a version of their Scriptures, oftentimes achieving martyrdom, but ever living a pure and a testifying life in face of the heathen, with the passion of these prophecies at their hearts. It was certainly for such centuries and such men that the word was written, *they shall walk and not faint*. This persistence under persecution, this monotonous drilling of themselves in school and synagogue, this slow progress without prize or praise along the common highways of the world and by the world's ordinary means of livelihood, was a greater proof of indomitableness than even the rapture which filled their hearts on the golden eve of the Return, under the full diapason of prophecy.

And so must it ever be. First the ideal, and the rush at it with passionate eyes, and then the daily trudge onward, when its splendour has faded from the



view, but is all the more closely wrapped round the heart. For glorious as it is to rise to some great consummation on wings of dream and song, glorious as it is, also, to bend that impetus a little lower and take some practical crisis of life by storm, an even greater proof of our religion and of the help our God can give us is the life-long tramp of earth's common surface, without fresh wings of dream, or the excitement of rivalry, or the attraction of reward, but with the head cool, and the face forward, and every footfall upon firm ground. Let hope rejoice in a promise, which does not go off into the air, but leaves us upon solid earth ; and let us hold to a religion, which, while it exults in being the secret of enthusiasm and the inspiration of heroism, is daring and Divine enough to find its climax in the commonplace.



## CHAPTER VII

### GOD: AN ARGUMENT FROM HISTORY

#### ISAIAH XLI

HAVING revealed Himself to His own people in chap. xl, Yahweh now turns in chap. xli to the heathen, but, naturally, with a very different kind of address. Displaying His power to His people in certain sacraments, both of nature and history, He had urged them to *wait upon Him* alone for the salvation, of which there were as yet no signs in the times. But with the heathen it is evidently to these signs of the times, that He can best appeal. Contemporary history, facts open to every man's memory and reason, is the common ground on which Yahweh and the other gods can meet. Chap. xli is, therefore, the natural complement to chap. xl. In chap. xl we have the element in revelation that precedes history: in chap. xli we have history itself explained as a part of revelation.

Chap. xli is loosely cast in the same form of a Trial-at-Law, which we found in chap. i. To use a Scoticism, which exactly translates the Hebrew of ver. 1, Yahweh goes *to the law* with the idols. His summons to the Trial is given in ver. 1; the ground of the Trial is advanced in vv. 2-7. Then comes a digression, vv. 8-20, in which the Lord turns from controversy with the heathen to comfort His people. In vv. 21-29 Yahweh's plea is resumed, and in the silence of the de-

fendants—a silence, which, as we shall presently see by calling in the witness of a Greek historian, was actual fact—the argument is summed up and the verdict given for the sole divinity of Israel's God.

The main interest of the Trial lies, of course, in its appeal to contemporary history, and to the central figure Cyrus, although it is to be noted that the prophet as yet refrains from mentioning the hero by name. This appeal to contemporary history lays upon us the duty of briefly indicating, how the course of that history was tending outside Babylon,—outside Babylon, as yet, but fraught with fate both to Babylon and to her captives.

Nebuchadrezzar, although he had virtually succeeded to the throne of the Assyrian, had not been able to repeat from Babylon that almost universal empire, which his predecessors had swayed from Nineveh. Egypt, it is true, was again as thoroughly driven from Asia as in the time of Sargon : to the south the Babylonian supremacy was as unquestioned as ever the Assyrian had been. But to the north Nebuchadrezzar met with an almost equal rival, who had helped him to the overthrow of Nineveh in 606, and had fallen heir to the Assyrian supremacy in that quarter. This was Kyaxares (Uvakhshatara), an Aryan, one of the pioneers of that Aryan invasion from the East, which, though still tardy and sparse, found opportunity for expansion across the lands of the now exhausted Hittite race in Armenia and Asia Minor, and was to be the leading force in Western Asia for the next century. This Kyaxares had united under his control a number of Median tribes,<sup>1</sup> a people of partly Aryan,

<sup>1</sup> Media, it has been held, means 'the country.' It is supposed, that of the six Median tribes, only one was Aryan, holding the rest, which

partly Turanian stock. With these, when Nineveh fell, he established to the north of Nebuchadrezzar's power the empire of Media, with its western boundary at the river Halys, in Asia Minor, and its capital at Ecbatana (Hagmatana, 'gathering-place') under Mount Elwand. It is said that the river Indus formed his frontier to the east. West of the Halys, the Mede's progress was stopped by the Lydian Empire, under King Alyattes, whose capital was Sardis, and whose other border was practically the coast of the Ægean. In 585, or two years after the destruction of Jerusalem, Alyattes and Kyaxares met in battle on the Halys. But the terrors of an eclipse took the heart to fight out of both their armies, and, Nebuchadrezzar intervening, the three monarchs struck a treaty among themselves, and strengthened it by intermarriage. Western Asia now virtually consisted of the confederate powers, Babylonia, Media, and Lydia.<sup>1</sup>

Let us realise how far this has brought us. When we stood with Isaiah in Jerusalem, our western horizon lay across the middle of Asia Minor in the longitude of Cyprus.<sup>2</sup> It now rests upon the Ægean; we are almost within sight of Europe. Straight from Babylon to Sardis runs a road, with a regular service of couriers. The court of Sardis holds domestic and political inter-

were Turanian, under its influence. Winckler calls the Medes the eastern part of the Indo-Germanic race, and describes them as consisting of many clans, nomadic or semi-nomadic (*K.A.T.*<sup>3</sup>, pp. 77, 100). But see his *Untersuchungen z. Altorientalischen Geschichte*, p. 122, where he concludes that the name Medes was first brought in by the Aryan conquerors of the Turanians, who had previously possessed the land.

<sup>1</sup> There were, besides, a few small independent powers in Asia Minor, such as Cilicia, whose prince also intervened at the Battle of the Eclipse; and the Ionian cities in the west. But all these, with perhaps the exception of Lycia, were brought into subjection to Lydia by Croesus, son of Alyattes.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. I, p. 90.

course with the courts of Babylon and Ecbatana ; but the court of Sardis also lords it over the Asiatic Greeks, worships at Greek shrines, will shortly be visited by Solon and strike an alliance with Sparta. In the time of the Jewish exile there were without doubt many Greeks in Babylon ; men may have spoken there with Daniel, who had spoken at Sardis with Solon.

This extended horizon makes clear to us what our prophet has in his view, when in this forty-first chapter he summons *Isles* to the bar of the God of Israel : *Be silent before me, O Isles, and let Peoples renew their strength*,—a vision and appeal which frequently recur in our prophecy. *Listen, O Isles, and hearken, O Peoples from afar* (xlix. 1) ; *Isles shall wait for His law* (xlii. 4) ; *Let them give glory to Yahweh, and publish His praise in the Isles* (xlii. 12) ; *Unto me Isles shall hope* (li. 5) ; *Surely the Isles shall wait for me, ships of Tarshish first* (lx. 9).<sup>1</sup> The name is generally taken by scholars—according to the derivation in the note below—to have originally meant *habitable land*, and so *land* as opposed to water. In some passages of the Old Testament it is undoubtedly used to describe a land either washed, or surrounded, by the sea.<sup>2</sup>

But by our prophet's use of the word it is not necessarily *maritime provinces* that are meant. He

<sup>1</sup> Other passages are : xli. 5, *Isles saw and feared, the ends of the earth trembled* ; xlii. 10, *The sea and its fulness, Isles and their dwellers* ; lix. 18, *He will repay, fury to His adversaries, recompence to His enemies : to the Isles He will repay recompence* ; lxvi. 19, *The nations, Tarshish, Pul, Lud, drawers of the bow, Tubal, Javan, the Isles afar off that have not heard my fame*. The Hebrew is יָם יָיִן, and is supposed to be from a root יָיִן 'awah, *to betake oneself to a place of dwelling or rest*, which sense, however, never attaches to the verb in Hebrew, but is borrowed from the cognate Arabic word. So יָיִן may originally have meant just the place to which mariners come for rest.

<sup>2</sup> Of the Philistine coast, Isa. xx. 6 ; of the Tyrian coast, Isa. xxiii. 2, 6 ; of Greece, Ezek. xxvii. 7 ; of Crete, Jer. xlvii. 4 ; of the islands of the sea, Isa. xi. 11 and Esther x. 1.

makes *isles* parallel to the well-known terms *nations*, *peoples*, *Gentiles*, and in one passage he opposes it, as dry or habitable soil, to water.<sup>1</sup> Hence many translators take it in its original sense of *countries* or *lands*. This bare rendering, however, does not do justice to the sense of *remoteness*, which the prophet generally attaches to the word, nor to his occasional association of it with visions of the sea. Indeed, as one reads most of his uses of it, one is sure that the island-meaning of the word lingers on in his imagination ; and that the feeling possesses him, which has haunted the poetry of all ages, to describe as *coasts* or *isles* any land or lighting-place of thought which is far and dim and vague ; which floats across the horizon, or emerges from the distance, as strips and promontories of land rise from the sea to him who has reached some new point of view. I have therefore decided to keep the rendering familiar to the English reader, *isles*, though, perhaps, *coasts* or *coast-lands* would be better. If, as is probable, our prophet's thoughts are always towards the new lands of the west when he uses the word, it is doubly suitable ; those countries were both maritime and remote ; they rose both from the distance and from the sea.

‘ The sprinkled isles,

Lily on lily, that o’erlace the sea

And laugh their pride, where the light wave lisps, “ Greece.” ’

But if Babylonia lay thus open to Lydia, and through Lydia to the *isles* and *coasts* of Greece, it was different with her northern frontier. What strikes us here is the immense series of fortifications, which Nebuchadrezzar, in spite of his alliance with Astyages, cast up between his country and Media. Where the Tigris and Euphrates most nearly approach one another, about

<sup>1</sup> xlii. 15 : Eng. version, *I will turn rivers into islands*.



seventy miles to the north of Babylon, Nebuchadrezzar connected their waters by four canals, above which he built a strong bulwark, called by the Greeks the Median wall. This may have been over sixty miles long ; Xenophon tells us it was twenty feet broad by one hundred high.<sup>1</sup> At Sippara this line of defence was completed by the creation of a great bason of water to flood the rivers and canals on the approach of an enemy, and of a large fortress to protect the bason. Yet it was said to have been this very bason which caused the easy fall of Babylon, and that, by turning the Euphrates into it, the enemy entered the capital through the emptied river-bed.

The triple alliance—Lydia, Media, Babylonia—stood firm after its founders passed away. In 555, Croesus and Astyages, who had succeeded Alyattes and Kyaxares<sup>2</sup> at Sardis and Ecbatana respectively, and Nabunahid, who had usurped the throne at Babylon, were still at peace, and contented with the partition of 585. But beyond them to the east the man was already crowned, who was destined to bring Western Asia under one sceptre. This was Kurush, or Cyrus II, known to history as Cyrus the Persian and Cyrus the Great. His kingdom or principality was the little state of Anshan or Anzan, which lay north (or north-east) of Elam on the slopes of the Zagros range and about the sources of the river Choaspes, between Elam and Media.<sup>3</sup> He was a prince of the Akhæmenian house of

<sup>1</sup> *Anabasis* 2, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Astyages, generally thought on Herodotus' statement to be the son of Kyaxares, may have been a usurper, who revived the Scythian supremacy in Media : see Winckler, *Untersuchungen z. Altorientalischen Geschichte* (1889), pp. 124 f. ; and Tiele, *Enc. Bibl.*, col. 3070.

<sup>3</sup> See Winckler, *op. cit.*, p. 115 : 'Anshan or Anzan, certainly not Susiana itself, but rather a small state lying on the border between Elam



Persia, and therefore, like the most influential of the Median tribes, an Aryan, but independent of his Persian cousins.<sup>1</sup>

Cyrus the Great is one of those mortals whom the muse of history, as if despairing to do justice to him by herself, has called in her sisters to aid her in describing to posterity. Early legend and later and more elaborate romance; the schoolmaster, the historian, the tragedian, and the prophet, all vie in presenting to us this hero 'le plus sympathique de l'antiquité'<sup>2</sup>—this king on whom we see so deeply stamped the double signature of God, character and success. We shall afterwards have a better opportunity to speak of his character. Here we are only concerned to trace his rapid path of conquest.

He sprang, then, from Anshan, a near neighbour of Babylonia to the east. This is the direction indicated in the second verse of this forty-first chapter: *Who hath raised up one from the east?* But the twenty-fifth verse veers round with him to the north: *I have raised up one from the north, and he is come.* This was

and Media,' and therefore, 'as we can understand, occasionally reckoned to Elam, as well as sometimes counted among the Medes;' cf. *K.A.T.*<sup>3</sup>, pp. 28, etc. But Tiele, *Enc. Bibl.*, col. 978, calls Anshan 'an Elamite province, probably with Susa (Shushan) for capital.'

<sup>1</sup> There appear to have been two branches of the Persian royal family after Teispes (Sishpish), son of Akhæmenes (Hakhamanish) the founder. Teispes annexed Anshan. His son Cyrus I became its prince; his other son, Ariaramnes, became King of Persia. They were succeeded by their sons Kambyzes I and Arsames. Kambyzes I was the father of Cyrus II, the great Cyrus, who rejoined Persia and Anshan to the exclusion of his second cousin Hystaspes, and was succeeded by his son Kambyzes II, with whom the Anshan line closed, and the power was transferred to Darius, son of Hystaspes. See Ragozin's *Media* in the *Story of the Nations* series; *Enc. Bibl.*, col. 3671; but especially Winckler, *Untersuchungen z. Altorientalischen Geschichte*, pp. 126 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Halévy, 'Cyrus et le Retour de l'Exil' in *Etudes Juives I.*

actually the curve, from east to north, which his career almost immediately took.

For in 549 Astyages, king of Media, attacked Cyrus,<sup>1</sup> king of Anshan ; which means that Cyrus was already a considerable and an aggressive prince. Probably he had united by this time the two domains of his house, Persia and Anshan, under his own sceptre, and secured as his lieutenant Hystaspes, his cousin, the lineal king of Persia. The Mede, looking south and east from Ecbatana, saw a solid front opposed to him, and resolved to crush it before it grew more formidable. But the Aryans among the Medes, dissatisfied with so indolent a leader as Astyages, revolted to Cyrus, and the latter, with characteristic good fortune, easily became lord of Media in 550 B.C. A lenient lord he made. He spared Astyages,<sup>2</sup> and ranked the Aryan Medes second only to the Persians. But it took him till 546 to complete his conquest. When he had done so he stood master of Asia from the Halys to perhaps as far east as the Indus. He replaced the Medes in the threefold power of Western Asia, and thus looked down on Babylon *from the north* (xli. 25).

In 545 Cyrus advanced upon Babylonia, and struck at the northern line of fortifications at Sippara. He was opposed by an army under Belshazzar, Bel-shar-uzzur, the son of Nabunahid, and probably by his mother's side grandson of Nebuchadrezzar. Army or fortifications seem to have been too much for Cyrus, and there is no further mention of his name in the Babylonian annals till the year 538. It has been suggested that

<sup>1</sup> Inscription of Nabunahid ; see next note.

<sup>2</sup> The capture of Astyages by Cyrus is recorded in the inscription of Nabunahid, quoted by Winckler, *Untersuchungen z. Altorientalischen Geschichte*, pp. 125 f.

Cyrus was aware of the discontent of the people, and especially of the priesthood, with their ruler Nabunahid, who had attempted to centralise the innumerable local cults of Babylonia in the capital under the headship of the god Marduk, and to gather all their images there; and, with that genius which distinguished his whole career for availing himself of the internal politics of his foes, Cyrus may have been content to wait till the Babylonian dissatisfaction had grown riper, perhaps in the meantime fostering it by his own emissaries.

In any case, the attention of Cyrus was now urgently demanded on the western boundary of his empire, where Lydia was preparing to invade him. Cræsus, king of Lydia, fresh from the subjection of the Ionian Greeks, and possessing an army and a treasure second to none in the world, had lately asked of Solon, whether he was not the most fortunate of men; and Solon had answered, to count no man happy till his death. The applicability of this advice to himself Cræsus must have felt with a start, when, almost immediately after it, the news came that his brother-in-law Astyages had fallen before an unknown power, which was moving up rapidly from the east, and already touched the Lydian frontier at the Halys. Cræsus was thrown into alarm. He eagerly desired to know Heaven's will about this Persian and himself, who now stood face to face. But, in that heathen world, with its thousand shrines to different gods, who knew the will of Heaven? In a fashion possible to the richest man in the world, Cræsus resolved to discover, by sending a test-question, on a matter of fact within his own knowledge, to every oracle of repute: to the oracles of the Greeks at Miletus, Delphi, Abæ; to that of Trophonius; to the sanctuary of Amphiaraus at Oropus; to Dodona; and

even to the far-off temple of Ammon in Libya. The oracles of Delphi and Amphiaraus alone sent an answer, which in the least suggested the truth. To the god of Delphi Cræsus offered a great sacrifice,—‘three thousand victims of every kind ; and on a great pile of wood he burned couches plated with gold and silver, golden goblets, purple robes and garments, in the hope that he would thereby gain the favour of the god yet more. . . . And as the sacrifice left behind an enormous mass of molten gold, Cræsus caused bricks to be made, six palms in length, three in breadth, and one in depth ; in all there were 117 bricks. . . . In addition there was a golden lion which weighed ten talents. When these were finished, Cræsus sent them to Delphi ; and he added two very large mixing bowls, one of gold, weighing eight talents and a half and twelve minæ, and one of silver (the work of Theodorus of Samos, as the Delphians say, and I believe it, for it is the work of no ordinary artificer), four silver jars, and two vessels for holy water, one of gold, the other of silver, circular casts of silver, a golden statue of a woman three cubits high, and the necklace and girdles of his queen.’<sup>1</sup> We can understand that for all this Cræsus got the best advice consistent with the ignorance and caution of the priests whom he consulted. The oracles told him that if he went against Cyrus he would destroy a great empire ; but he forgot to ask, whether it was his own or his rival’s. When he inquired a second time, if his reign should be long, they replied : ‘When a mule became king of the Medes,’ then he might fly from his throne ; but again he forgot to consider that there might be mules among men as among beasts.’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Herodotus, Book I, 46, 50, 51.

<sup>2</sup> Herodotus explains this by his legend of Cyrus’ birth, according to which Cyrus was a hybrid—half Persian, half Mede.

At the same time, the oracles tempered their ambiguous prophecies with some advice of undoubted sense, for when he asked them who were the most powerful among the Greeks, they replied the Spartans, and to Sparta he sent messengers with presents to conclude an alliance. 'The Lacedæmonians were filled with joy; they knew the oracle which had been given Cræsus, and made him a friend and ally, as they had previously received many kindnesses at his hands.' <sup>1</sup>

This glimpse into the preparations of Cræsus, whose embassies compassed the civilised world, and whose wealth got him all that politics or religion could give, enables us to realise the political and religious excitement into which the advent of Cyrus threw that generation. The oracles in doubt and ambiguous; the priests, the idol-manufacturers, and the crowd of artisans, who worked in every city at the furniture of the temple, in a state of unexampled activity; hammering new idols together, preparing costly oblations, overhauling the whole religious 'ordnance,' that the gods might be propitiated and the stars secured to fight in their courses against the Persian; rival politicians practising conciliation, and bolstering up one another with costly presents to stand against this strange and fatal force, which indifferently threatened them all. What a commentary Herodotus furnishes upon the verses of this chapter, in which Yahweh contrasts the idols with Himself. It may possibly have been Cræsus and the Greeks whom the prophet had in his mind when he wrote vv. 5-7: *The isles, or coastlands, have seen, and they fear; the ends of the earth tremble: they draw near and they come. They help every man his neighbour, and*

<sup>1</sup> Herodotus, Book I, 69.



*to his brother each sayeth, Be strong. So carver encourageth smelter, smother with hammer smiter on anvil ; one saith of the soldering, It is good : and he fasteneth it with nails lest it totter.* The irony is severe, but true to the facts as Herodotus relates them. The statesmen hoped to keep back Cyrus by sending sobbing messages to one another, Be of good courage ; the priests ' by making a particularly good and strong set of gods.' <sup>1</sup>

While the imbecility of the idolatries was thus manifest, and the great religious centres of heathendom were reduced to utter doubt that veiled itself in ambiguity and waited to see how things would issue, there was one religion in the world, whose oracles gave no uncertain sound, whose God stepped boldly forth to claim Cyrus for His own. In the dust of Babylonia lay the scattered members of a nation captive and exiled, a people civilly dead and religiously degraded ; yet it was the faith of this *worm of a nation* which welcomed and understood Cyrus, it was the God of this people who claimed to be his creator. The forty-first chapter looks dreary and ancient to the uninstructed eye, but let our imagination realise all these things : the ambiguous priests, oracles that would not speak out, religions that had no articulate counsel or comfort in face of the conqueror who was crushing up the world before him, but only sobs, solder and nails ; and our hearts will leap as we hear how God forces them all into judgement before Him, and makes His plea as loud and clear as mortal ear may hear. Clatter of idols, and murmur of muffled oracles, filling all the world ; and then, hark how the voice of YAHWEH crashes His Word across it all !

<sup>1</sup> Sir Edward Strachey.



- xli. 1. *Be silent before Me, O Isles,  
And O peoples . . . (?)*<sup>1</sup>  
*Let them approach, then may they speak,  
Together to the Law*<sup>2</sup> *let us come !*
2. *Who was it stirred up from the sunrise  
Him on whose footsteps victory*<sup>3</sup> *waits ?*  
*He giveth up nations before him  
And kings layeth low.*<sup>4</sup>  
*His sword, it sets them like dust,*<sup>5</sup>  
*Like driven stubble his bow.*
3. *He pursues them, passing on safely  
By a path untouched by his feet.*<sup>6</sup>
4. *Who hath done it and wrought it ?  
Summoner of the generations from the fountain-  
head  
I, Yahweh, the First,  
And with the last I am He.*
5. *[The isles have seen and have feared,  
The ends of the earth are trembling  
They are drawn near and come.]*<sup>7</sup>

The Hebrew text of these verses has suffered much in the course of its tradition, and as it stands is full of

<sup>1</sup> Heb. has *renew their strength*, which is meaningless here, and apparently a scribe's careless repetition from the preceding verse, xl. 31. Budde and Cheyne, after Klostermann, would read *wait for my argument*.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *mishpat* usually = *judgement*, but here of a trial at law.

<sup>3</sup> So most recent translators, and rightly, for the Heb. *sedek*, *righteousness*, has here its secondary meaning of carrying *right* through to success or fulfilment. See below, chap. xiv. Budde: *who stirred up from the sunrise the righteous called him behind Him and he went* (after LXX).

<sup>4</sup> So by a change of the vowel points Ewald, Duhm, Box, and Moffatt. Klostermann, Cheyne, and Marti read, after the LXX, *affrighted*.

<sup>5</sup> With different possessives, LXX has *makes their sword as dust, as driven stubble their bow*: Budde, Skinner, and others.

<sup>6</sup> Lit. *a path on his feet he cometh not by*.

<sup>7</sup> Ver. 5 seems interpolated; vv. 6, 7 find a better context, as we have seen, after xl. 19.

difficulties. But the meaning is clear. Though Cyrus is not named, his course is unmistakably described—*out of the sunrise*, attended at every step by victory, and incredibly swift, *by a path his feet touched not*, more like the flight of an avenging angel than the slow marches of an earthly army. But the *Stirrer up*, the *Doer*, of it all is Israel's God.

There follow (vv. 6, 7) the satiric lines on the heathen gods and their makers, for which a more appropriate place has been found after xl. 19. And then after an interval (vv. 8–20), in which Yahweh turns to Israel—for whatever be His business or controversy with others the Lord is always mindful of His own—He challenges once more (21–29) the idols, their oracles and priests.

We have seen what these were, which this vast heathen world—heathen but human, as convinced as we are that at the back of the world's life there is a secret, a counsel and a governor, and as anxious as we are to find them—had to resort to. Timid waiters upon time, whom not even the wealth of a Croesus could tempt from their ambiguity; prophets speechless in face of history; oracles of meaning as dark and shiftily as their steamy caves at Delphi, of tune as variable as the whispering oak of Dodona; wily-tongued Greeks, masters of ambiguous phrase, at Miletus, Abæ, and Thebes; Egyptian mystics in the far off temple of 'Lybic Hammon,'—these are what the prophet sees standing at the bar of history, where God is Challenger.

xli. 21. *Put ye forward your plea,  
Saith Yahweh, the God,<sup>1</sup>  
Apply your strong proofs,<sup>2</sup>  
Saith Jacob's King.*

<sup>1</sup> So LXX.

<sup>2</sup> Budde would read *Bring here your idols*.

- xli. 22. *Let them bring and inform us  
What things are to happen,  
Declare what the former things <sup>1</sup> were  
That we take them to heart ;  
Or give us to hear the things that are coming,<sup>2</sup>  
That we own their result.<sup>2</sup>*
23. *Declare the things that come hereafter  
That we know ye are Gods !  
Yea do some good or some evil,  
That we stare and see it together.*
24. *Lo, ye are less than nought,  
And your doings than nothing.<sup>3</sup>*

Which great challenge just means, Come and be tested by facts. Here is history needing an explanation, and running no one knows whither. Prove your divinity by interpreting or guiding it. Cease your ambiguities, and give us something we can set our minds to work upon. Or do something, effect something in history, be it good or be it evil,—only let it be patent to our senses. For the test of godhead is not ingenuity or mysteriousness, but plain deeds, which the senses can perceive, and plain words, which the reason and conscience can judge. The insistence upon the senses and mental faculties of man is remarkable : *Make us hear them, that we may know, stare, see all together, set our mind to them.*

But as we have learned from Herodotus, there was nobody in the world to answer such a challenge. Therefore Yahweh Himself answers it. He gives His explanation of history, and claims its events for His doing.

<sup>1</sup> On *former things*, see p. 124.

<sup>2</sup> These lines are transposed.

<sup>3</sup> The line *Abomination who chooseth you*, is probably an interpolation, according to most : Budde treains it.

25. *I have stirred him up from the North, he is come,<sup>1</sup>  
From the Sunrise I call him by name,<sup>2</sup>  
To trample on satraps like mortar,  
As a potter treads out the clay.*
26. *Who announced from the first, we might know,  
And aforetime we may say he is Right ?<sup>3</sup>  
Yea none that announced, none that let hear,  
Yea none that was hearing your words !*
27. *The prediction was Sion's ' Behold them, behold  
them,'<sup>4</sup>  
To Jerusalem a bearer of tidings I gave,*
28. *But of these<sup>5</sup> when I looked there was none.  
Among these not a counsellor,  
Though I asked them to give back a word.<sup>6</sup>*
29. *Lo, all of them vanity, nought are their works,  
Their<sup>7</sup> images wind and waste.*

Let us look a little more closely at the power of PREDICTION, on which Yahweh thus maintains His unique and sovereign Deity against the idols.<sup>8</sup>

He challenges the idols to face present events, and to give a clear, unambiguous forecast of their issue. It is a debatable question, whether He does not also ask them to produce previous predictions of events

<sup>1</sup> LXX omits *he is come* : so also Budde.

<sup>2</sup> So, in conformity with xlv. 3, Marti and others. Heb. has *who calls on My Name* ; so Budde.

<sup>3</sup> Or *true*, Heb. *šaddîq*. Arabs use the same root when saying of a speaker, ' he is right ' (Doughty, *Arabia Deserta*, i).

<sup>4</sup> The text of this line is very doubtful. Cheyne, followed by others, emends it to *I declared it first unto Sion*. But, in any case, the meaning is clear.

<sup>5</sup> A possible emendation suggested by LXX.

<sup>6</sup> Or *that I might ask them and they answer*.

<sup>7</sup> LXX *your* ; so Budde and others.

<sup>8</sup> On the political predictions of the prophets, see Edghill, *An Enquiry into the Evidential Value of Prophecy* (1906), pp. 113 ff.

happening at the time at which He speaks. This latter demand is one that He makes in subsequent chapters ; it is part of His prophet's argument in chaps. xlv-xlvi, that Yahweh intimated the advent of Cyrus by His servants in Israel long before the present time. Whether He makes this same demand for previous predictions in chap. xli depends on how we render a clause of ver. 22, *declare ye the former things*. Some scholars take *former things* in the sense, in which it is used later on in this prophecy, of *previous predictions*. This is very doubtful. I have explained in a note, why I think them wrong ; but even if they are right, and Yahweh be really asking the idols to produce former predictions of Cyrus' career, the demand is so cursory, it proves so small an item in His plea, and we shall afterwards find so many clearer statements of it, that we do better to ignore it now and confine ourselves to emphasising the other challenge, about which there is no doubt,—the challenge to take present events and predict their issue.<sup>1</sup> Crœsus had asked the oracles for a forecast of

<sup>1</sup> ראשונות *r'ishonôth* is a relative term, meaning *head things, things ahead, first things, prior things*, whether in rank or time. Here, of course, the time meaning is undoubted. But *ahead of what ? prior to what ?*—this is the difficulty. Ewald, Hitzig, A. B. Davidson, Driver, etc., take it as prior to the standpoint of the speaker ; things that happened or were uttered previous to him,—a sense in which the word is used in subsequent chapters. But Delitzsch, Hahn, Cheyne, etc., take it to be things prior to other things that will happen in the later future, early events, as opposed to הבאות of the next clause, which they take to mean subsequent things, *things that are to come* afterwards. I think Dr. Davidson's reasons (see *Expositor*, second series, vol. vii, p. 256) are quite conclusive against this view of Delitzsch, that in this clause the idols are being asked to predict events in the near future. It is difficult, as he says, to see why the idols should be given a choice between the earlier and the later future : nor does the הבאות of the contrasted clause at all suggest a later future ; it simply means *things coming*, a term which is as applicable to the near as to the far future. Nevertheless, I am not persuaded that Dr. Davidson's own view of *r'ishonôth* is the correct one. The rest of the context (see above) is occupied with predictions of the future only. And *r'ishonôth*



the future. This is exactly what Israel's God demands in ver. 22, *declare unto us what things are going to happen* ; in ver. 23, *declare the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods* ; in ver. 26 (spoken from the standpoint of the subsequent fulfilment of the prediction), *who declared it from the first, or on-ahead, that we may know, and beforehand that we may now say ' Right ! ' Yea, there is none that declared, yea, there is none that let hear, yea, there is none that was hearing your words. ' But the first (or a prediction) was to Sion, ' Behold, behold them,' and to Jerusalem a herald of good news—I give. I give is emphatically placed at the end,—' I Yahweh alone, through my prophets in Israel, give such a prediction and publisher of good news.'*

We scarcely require to remind ourselves that this great challenge and plea are not mere rhetoric or idle boasting. Every word in them we have seen to be true to fact. The heathen religions were, as they are here represented, helpless before Cyrus, and dumb about the issue of the great movements which the Persian had started. On the other hand, Yahweh claims to have uttered to His people all the meaning of the new

does not necessarily mean previous predictions, although used in this sense in the subsequent chapters. It simply means, as we have seen, *head things, things ahead, things beforehand, or fountain-things, origins, causes*. That we are to understand it here in some such general and absolute sense is suggested, I think, by the word אַחֲרִיתֶן which follows it, *their result or issue*, and is confirmed by ראשון, r'ishôn (masc. singular) of ver. 27, which is undoubtedly used in a general sense, meaning *something or somebody on ahead, an anticipator, predictor, forerunner* (as Cheyne gives it) ; or, a possible rendering is neuter, a *prediction*. If r'ishôn in ver. 27 means a thing or a man given beforehand, then r'ishonôth in ver. 22 may also mean things given beforehand, predictions made now, or at least things selected and announced as causes now, whose issue, אַחֲרִיתֶן, may be recognised in the future. In a word, r'ishonôth would mean things not necessarily *previous* to the speech in which they were allowed, but simply things *previous* to certain results, or *anticipating* certain events, either as their prediction or as their cause.



stir and turmoil in history. We have heard Him do so in chap. xl. There He *gives a herald of good news to Jerusalem*,—tells them of their approaching deliverance, explains His redemptive purposes, proclaims a gospel. In addition, He has in this chapter accepted Cyrus for His own creation and as part of His purpose, and has promised him victory.

The God of Israel, then, is God, because He alone by His prophets claims facts as they stand for His own deeds, and announces what shall become of them.

Do not let us, however, fall into the easy error of supposing that the God of Israel claims to be God simply because He can predict. It is indeed prediction, which He demands from the heathen; for prediction is a minimum of godhead, and in asking it He condescends to the heathen's own ideas of what a god should be able to do. When Cræsus, the heathen who of all of that time spent most upon religion, sought to decide which of the gods was worthiest to be consulted about the future and propitiated in face of Cyrus, what test did he apply to them? As we have seen, he tested them by their ability to predict a matter of fact: the god who told him what he, Cræsus, should be doing on a certain day was to be his god. It is evident, that, to Cræsus, divinity meant to be able to divine. But the God, who reveals Himself to Israel, is infinitely greater than this. He is not merely a Being with a far sight into the future; He is not only Omniscience. In the chapter preceding this one His power of prediction is not once expressed; it is lost in the two glories by which alone the prophet seeks to commend His Godhead to Israel,—the glory of His power and the glory of His faithfulness. Yahweh is Omnipotence, Creator of heaven and earth; He leads forth the stars by *the greatness of His might*; Supreme Director of history, it is He *who bringeth princes*

to nothing. But He is also unfailing character: *the word of the Lord standeth for ever*; it is foolishness to say of Him that He has forgotten His people, or that *their right has passed* from Him; He disappoints none who wait upon Him. Such is the God, who steps down from chap. xl into the controversy with the heathen in chap. xli. If in the latter He chiefly makes His claim to godhead to rest upon specimens of prediction, it is simply, as we have said, that He may meet the gods of the heathen before a bar and upon a principle, which their worshippers recognise as practical and decisive. What were single predictions, here and there, upon the infinite volume of His working, who by His power could gather all things to serve His own purpose, and in His faithfulness remained true to that purpose from everlasting to everlasting! The unity of history under One Will—this is a far more adequate idea of godhead than the mere power to foretell single events of history. And it is even to this truth that Israel's God seeks to raise the unaccustomed thoughts of the heathen. Past the rude wonder, which is all that fulfilled predictions of fact can excite, He lifts their religious sense to Himself and His purpose, as the one secret and motive of all history. He not only claims Cyrus and Cyrus' career as His own work, but He speaks of Himself as *summoner of the generations from the fountainhead*; *I Yahweh, the First, and with the Last I am He*. It is a consummate expression of godhead, which lifts us far above the thought of Him as a mere divining power.

Now, it is well for us—were it only for the great historic interest of the thing, though it will also further our argument—to take record here that, although this conception of the unity of life under One Purpose and Will was still utterly foreign, and perhaps even unin-

telligible, to the heathen world, which the prophecy has in view, the first serious attempt in that world to reach such a conception was contemporary with the forty-first chapter of Isaiah. It is as miners feel, when, tunnelling from opposite sides of a mountain, they begin to hear the noise of each other's picks through the dwindling rock. We, who have come down the history of Israel towards the great consummation of religion in Christianity, may here cease for a moment our labours, to listen to the faint sound from the other side of the wall, still separating Israel from Greece, of a witness to God and an argument against idolatry similar to those with which we have been working. Who is not moved by learning, that, in the very years when Jewish prophecy reached its most perfect statement of monotheism, pouring its scorn upon the idols and their worshippers, and in the very *Isles* on which its hopes and influence were set, the first Greek should be already singing, who used his song to satirise the mythologies of his people, and to celebrate the unity of God? Among the Ionians, whom Cyrus' invasion of Lydia and of the Ægean coast in 544 drove across the seas, was Xenophanes of Colophon.<sup>1</sup> After some wanderings he settled at Elea in South Italy, and became the founder of the Eleatic school, the first philosophic attempt of the Greek mind to grasp the unity of Being. How far Xenophanes himself succeeded in this attempt is a matter of controversy. The few fragments of his poetry which are extant do not reveal him as a philosophical monotheist, so much as a prophet of 'One greatest God.' His language (like that of the earlier Hebrew prophets in praising their God) apparently implies the real existence of lesser divinities:—

<sup>1</sup> Ueberweg, *History of Philosophy*, English translation, i, 51.

'One God, 'mongst both gods and men He is greatest,  
Neither in shape is He like unto mortals, nor thought.' <sup>1</sup>

Xenophanes scorns the anthropomorphism of his countrymen, and the lawless deeds which their poets had attributed to the gods:—

'Mortals think the gods can be born, have their feelings, voice and form; but, could horses or oxen draw like men, they too would make their gods after their own image.' <sup>2</sup>

'All things did Homer and Hesiod lay on the gods,  
Such as with mortals are full of blame and disgrace,  
To steal and debauch and outwit one another.' <sup>3</sup>

Our prophet, to whose eyes Gentile religiousness was wholly of the gross Cræsus kind, little suspected that he had an ally, with such kindred tempers of faith and scorn, among the very peoples to whom he yearns to convey his truth. But ages after, when Israel and Greece had both issued into Christianity, the service of Xenophanes to the common truth was recounted by two Church writers—by Clement of Alexandria in his *Stromata*, and by Eusebius the historian in his *Præparatio Evangelica*.

We find, then, that monotheism had reached its most absolute expression in Israel in the same decade, in which the first efforts towards the conception of the unity of Being were just starting in Greece. But there is something more to be stated. In spite of the splendid progress, which it pursued from such beginnings, Greek philosophy never reached the height on which, with Second Isaiah, Hebrew prophecy already rests; and the reason has to do with two points on which we are

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, Bk. V, ch. iv, and by Eusebius, *Præp. Evang.*, xiii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Ueberweg, as above.

now engaged,—the omnipotence and the righteousness of God.

Professor Pfleiderer remarks : ‘ Even in the idealistic philosophy of the Greeks . . . matter remains, however sublimated, an irrational something, with which the Divine power can never come to terms. It was only in the consciousness, which the prophets of Israel had of God, that the thought of the Divine omnipotence fully prevailed.’<sup>1</sup> We cannot overvalue such high and impartial testimony to the uniqueness of the Hebrew doctrine of God, but it needs to be supplemented. To the prophets’ sense of the Divine omnipotence, we must add their unrivalled consciousness of the Divine character. To them Yahweh is not only the *Holy*, the incomparable God, almighty and sublime ; He is also the true, consistent God. He has a great purpose, which He has revealed of old to His people, and to which He remains for ever faithful. To express this the Hebrews had one word,—the word we translate *righteous*. We should often miss our prophet’s meaning, if by *righteousness* we understood some of the qualities to which the term is generally confined by us : if, for instance, we used it in the general sense of morality, or if we gave it the technical meaning, which it bears in Christian theology, of justification from guilt. We shall afterwards devote a chapter to the exposition of its meaning in Second Isaiah, but let us here look at its use in chap. xli. In ver. 26, it is applied to the person whose prediction turns out to be correct : men are to say of him *right* or *righteous*. Here it is evident that the Hebrew—*ṣaddîq*—is used in its simplest meaning, like the Latin *rectus*, and our ‘ right,’

<sup>1</sup> Pfleiderer, *Philosophy of Religion : Contents of the Religious Consciousness*, ch. i (Eng. trans., vol. iii, p. 291).



of what has been shown to be in accordance with truth or fact. In ver. 2, again, though the syntax is obscure, it seems to have the general sense of *good faith with the ability to ensure success*. Righteousness is here associated with Cyrus, because he has not been called for nothing, but in good faith for a purpose which will be carried through. Yahweh's righteousness, then, will be His trueness, His good faith, His consistency; and indeed this is the sense which it must evidently bear in ver. 10. Take it with the context :—

- xli. 8. *But thou, Israel, My Servant,  
O Jacob, whom I have chosen,  
Seed of Abraham, My friend,*  
9. *Thou whom I grasped from the ends of the earth,  
From her borders have called thee,  
And told thee, My Servant art thou,  
I have chosen, and not cast thee off.*  
10. *Fear thou not, for with thee am I !  
Look not in despair, for I am thy God.  
I strengthen thee, yea I will help thee,  
Yea, hold thee up by the right hand of My right-  
eousness.*<sup>1</sup>

Here *righteousness* evidently means that God will act *in good faith* to the people whom He has called, that He will act consistently with His ancient purposes for them. Israel has had hitherto nothing but the memory that God called them and the conscience that He chose them. Now God will vindicate this memory and conscience by outward fact. He will carry right through

<sup>1</sup> In the last couplet the Hebrew verbs are in the perfect, but this is only to express the determined will of the speaker; see Driver, *Tenses of the Hebrew Verb*, § 13.



His calling and fulfil His promise. How He will do so, He proceeds to relate :—

- xli. 11. *Lo, ashamed and confounded shall be  
All who were angered against thee,  
As nothing shall they be and perish,  
The men of thy strife.*
12. *Thou mayest seek them, but shalt not find them,  
The men of thy quarrel ;  
They shall be as nothing and nought,  
The men of thy warfare.*
13. *For I am Yahweh thy God,  
Grasping thy right hand,  
Who say to thee, Be not afraid,  
I, I do help thee.*
14. *Fear not, thou worm Jacob,  
Thou little worm Israel.  
It is I Who help thee—rede of Yahweh—  
Thy Redeemer, the Holy of Israel.*
15. *Lo, I make thee a sharp threshing-sledge,  
New and a lord of teeth !  
Mountains shalt thou thresh and crush,  
And hills shalt thou make like chaff.*
16. *Thou shalt winnow and the wind shall lift them,  
And the whirlwind scatter them off.  
But thou shalt exult in Yahweh,  
And rejoice in the Holy of Israel.*

Their redemption shall be accomplished in a series of evident facts, and on such a scale that all the world shall wonder and be convinced.

17. *The poor and needy seek water there is none,  
Their tongue for thirst faileth.  
I Yahweh, I will meet them,  
Israel's God, I will not forsake them.*

18. *On the bare heights I will open rivers,  
And founts in the midst of the valleys.  
I will turn the desert to pools of water,  
And the land that is dry to water-springs.*
19. *I will set in the wilderness cedars,  
Acacia, myrtle and oil-tree.<sup>1</sup>  
I will plant in the desert the pine,  
The plane-tree and sherbin together.*
20. *That they may see and acknowledge,  
And think and at once understand  
That Yahweh's hand hath done this,  
And Israel's Holy He hath created it.*

Do not let us take these verses literally, or even as illustrative of the kind of restoration Israel was to enjoy. This vast figure of the transformed desert the prophet sets forth rather to illustrate the scale on which the Restoration will take place. The whole passage tells us what God means by His *righteousness*. This is His fidelity to His calling of Israel and His purpose with His people—the quality by which He cannot forsake His own, but carries through and amply fulfils His promises to them ; by which He vindicates and justifies, in facts so large and splendid that they are evident to all mankind, His ancient word by His prophets.<sup>2</sup>

This lengthened exposition will not have been in vain if it has made clear that Hebrew monotheism owed its unique quality to the emphasis which the prophets laid upon the two truths of the Power and the Character of God. There was One Supreme Being, infinite in might, and with one purpose running down

<sup>1</sup> Probably the wild-olive, the oleaster.

<sup>2</sup> See further, ch. xiv of this volume, on the righteousness of Israel and God.

the ages, which He had plainly revealed, and to which He remained constant. The people, who knew this, did not need to wait for the fulfilment of certain test-predictions before trusting Him as the One God. Test-predictions and their fulfilment might be needful for the heathen, from whose minds the idea of One Supreme Being with such a character had vanished ; the heathen might need to be convinced by instances of Yahweh's omniscience, for omniscience, or the power to predict, was the most Divine attribute which they had conceived. But Israel's faith rested upon glories in the Divine nature of which omniscience was the mere consequence. Israel knew God was Almighty and All-true, and that was enough.

#### NOTE UPON YAHWEH'S CLAIM TO CYRUS

In ver. 25 a phrase is used of Cyrus which is very obscure, and to which, considering its vagueness even upon the most definite construction, far too much importance has been attached. The meaning of the words, the tenses, the syntax—perhaps even the original text itself—of this verse are uncertain. The English revisers give, *I have raised up one from the north, and he is come ; from the rising of the sun one that calleth upon My Name*. This is probably the true syntax.<sup>1</sup> But in what tense is the verb *to call*, and what does *calling upon My Name* mean ? In the Old Testament the phrase is used in two senses,—to *invoke or adore*, and to *proclaim or celebrate the name* of a person.<sup>2</sup> As long as scholars understood that Cyrus was a monotheist, there was a temptation to choose the former of these meanings, and to find in the verse Yahweh's claim upon the Persian, as a worshipper of Himself, the One True God. But this interpretation received a shock from the discovery of a proclamation of Cyrus after his entry into Babylon, in which he invokes the names of Babylonian deities, and calls himself

<sup>1</sup> And that which runs : . . . *he is come, from the rising of the sun he calleth upon My name*, is wrong.

<sup>2</sup> The former of these in ch. lxiv. 7 ; the latter in xlv. 4.

their 'servant.'<sup>1</sup> Of course, his doing so in the year 538 does not necessarily discredit a description of him as a monotheist eight years before. Between 548 and 546—the probable date of ch. xli—a prophet might in all good faith have hailed as a worshipper of Yahweh a Persian who still stood in the *rising of the sun*—who had not yet issued from the east and its radiant repute of a religion purer than the Babylonian ; although eight years afterwards, from motives of policy, the same king acknowledged the gods of his new subjects. This may be ; but there is a more natural way out of the difficulty. Is it fair to lay upon the expression, *calleth on My name*, so precise a meaning as that of a strict monotheism ? Some have turned to the other use of the verb, and, taking it in the future tense, have translated, *who shall proclaim or celebrate My name*—which Cyrus surely did, when, in the name of Yahweh, he drew up the edict for the return of the Jews to Palestine.<sup>2</sup> But do we need to put even this amount of meaning upon the phrase ? In itself it is vague, but it also stands parallel to another vague phrase : *I have raised up one from the north, and he is come ; from the sunrising one who calleth on My name*. Taken in apposition to the phrase *he is come, calleth on My name* may mean no more than that, answering to the instigation of Yahweh, and owning His impulse, Cyrus by his career proclaimed or celebrated Yahweh's name. In any case, we have said enough to show that, in our comparative ignorance of what Cyrus' faith was, and in face of the elastic use of the phrase *to call on the name of*, it is quite unwarrantable to maintain that the prophet must have meant a strict monotheist, and therefore absurd to draw the inference that the prophet was incorrect. A way has been attempted out of the difficulty by slightly altering the text, and so obtaining the version, *I have raised up one from the north, and he is come ; from the sunrise I call him by name*.<sup>3</sup> This is a change which is in harmony with chap. xlv. 3, 4, but has otherwise no evidence in its favour.

<sup>1</sup> Translation of the Cyrus-cylinder in 'Cyrus et le Retour de l'Exil,' by Halévy, *Revue des Études Juives*, No. 1, 1880.

<sup>2</sup> Ezra i. 2 ; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 22, 23.

<sup>3</sup> יקרא בשמי for אקרא בשמי.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PASSION OF GOD

ISAIAH XLII. 8-17 ; WITH 18-25 AND XLIII. 1-7

AT the beginning of chap. xlii we reach one of those distinct stages, the frequent appearance of which in our prophecy assures us, that, for all its mingling and recurrent style, the prophecy is a unity with a distinct, if somewhat involved, progress of thought.<sup>1</sup> For while chaps. xl and xli establish the sovereignty and declare the character of the One True God before His people and the heathen, chap. xlii takes what is naturally the next step, of publishing to both these classes His Divine will. This purpose of God is set forth in the first seven verses of the chapter. It is identified with a human Figure, who is to be God's agent upon earth, and who is styled *the Servant of Yahweh*. Next to the Lord Himself, the Servant of the Lord is by far the most important personage within our prophet's gaze. He is named, described, commissioned, and encouraged over and over again throughout the prophecy ; his character and indispensable work are hung upon with a frequency and a fondness almost equal to the steadfast faith, which

<sup>1</sup> That is as it now lies before us, however true or baseless the different theories of various sources for it may be. See above, p. 18.

the prophet reposes in God Himself. Were we following our prophecy chapter by chapter, now would be the time to put the question, Who is this Servant, who is suddenly introduced to us? and to look ahead for the various and even conflicting answers, which rise from the subsequent chapters. But we agreed, for clearness' sake,<sup>1</sup> to take all the passages about the Servant, which are easily detached from the rest of the prophecy, and treat them by themselves, and to continue in the meantime our prophet's main theme of the Power and Righteousness of God as shown forth in the deliverance of His people from Babylon. Accordingly, at present we pass over xlii. 1-7, keeping this firmly in mind, however, that God has appointed for His work upon earth, including, as it does, the ingathering of His people and the conversion of the Gentiles, a Servant,—a human figure of lofty character and unfailing perseverance, who makes God's work of redemption his own, puts his heart into it, and is upheld by God's hand. God, let us understand, has committed His cause upon earth to a human agent.

God's commission of His Servant is followed by His claim to be the Only God (vv. 8, 9) and this is hailed by a hymn. Earth answers the proclamation of the *new things* which the Almighty has declared by a *new song* (vv. 10-13), not of the Servant; its subject is Yahweh Himself.

xlii. 8. *I am Yahweh, the God,<sup>2</sup>  
That is My Name!  
My Glory I give to no other,  
Nor My praise to the idols.*

<sup>1</sup> See Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> So LXX.



- xlii. 9. *The former things,<sup>1</sup> lo, come to pass,  
And new I proclaim.  
Before they spring up,  
I am letting you hear.*
10. *Sing a new song unto Yahweh,  
His praise from the end of the earth,  
Who go down to the sea,<sup>2</sup> and its fulness,  
The Isles and their dwellers.*
11. *Let the desert rejoice and its townships,  
The settlements Kedar inhabits,  
Ring out let the dwellers on Sela,  
Shout from the top of the mountains !*
12. *Let them give to Yahweh the glory,  
And tell out His praise to the Isles.<sup>3</sup>*
13. *Yahweh goes forth as a hero,  
Stirs zeal like a man of war,  
Raises the alarm and the battle-cry,  
Proves Him a hero over His foes.*

The terms of the last four lines are military. Most of them will be found in the historical books, in descriptions of the onset of Israel's battles with the heathen. But it is no human warrior to whom they are here applied. They who sing have forgotten the Servant. Their hearts are warm only with this, that God Him-

<sup>1</sup> Or *predictions*.

<sup>2</sup> Or with Lowth, by the change of a few letters, read *let the sea roar*, as in Psalms xcvi. 11, xcvi. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Some omit this couplet as breaking into a series of four-lined verses and superfluous to the meaning. For *isles* Budde reads *nations*.

self will come down to earth to raise the war-cry against the Babylonians and bear the brunt of the battle. And to such a hope He now responds, speaking also of Himself and not of the Servant. His words are intense, and strain with inward travail. The metre approaches again that of the *Kinah*.

14. *I have been silent—shall I for ever*<sup>1</sup>  
*Be dumb, hold myself in?*  
*Like a travailing woman I groan, I gasp,*  
*And pant together.*

Remember that it is God who speaks these words of Himself, and then think what they mean of unshareable thought and pain, of solitary yearning and effort. But from the travail comes forth at last the power.

15. *Mountains and hills shall I waste*  
*And parch all their herbage.*  
*Rivers I shall turn into deserts*<sup>2</sup>  
*And dry up the marshes.*

Yet it is not the passion of mere physical effort that is in God, nor the mere excitement of war that thrills Him. But the suffering of men is upon Him: He has taken their redemption to heart. He had said to His Servant: I give thee . . . to open the blind eyes, to bring out the bound from prison, from the prison-house the dwellers in darkness. But here He takes upon Himself the sympathy and the strain of that work.

<sup>1</sup> So LXX, turning the Heb. into a question.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *isles or coastlands*. I follow Oort, Budde, and Duhm in reading deserts.

- xlii. 16. *The blind I will help to walk on the way,<sup>1</sup>  
       On paths they know not will lead them.  
       I will turn the darkness before them to light,  
       And the serrated lands to level.  
       These are the things I determined to do,<sup>2</sup>  
       Nor will leave them undone (?)*
17. *[They fall back] clothed in shame shall they be<sup>3</sup>  
       Who trust in carved idols,  
       Who say to the cast ones,  
       Ye are our gods !*

Now this pair of passages, in one of which God lays the work of redemption upon His human agent, and in another Himself puts on its passion and travail, form only one instance of a duality that runs through the whole of the Old Testament. As we repeatedly saw in the prophecies of Isaiah himself, there is a double promise of the future through the Old Testament:—*first*, that God will achieve the salvation of Israel by an extraordinary human personality, who is figured now as a King, now as a Prophet, and now as a Priest; but, *second* also, that God Himself, in undeputed, unshared power, will come visibly to deliver His people and to reign over them. These two lines of prophecy run parallel, and even entangled, through the Old Testament, but within its bounds no attempt is made to reconcile them. They pass from it still separate, to find their synthesis, as we all know, in One of whom each is the incomplete prophecy. While considering

<sup>1</sup> Heb. adds *they know not*, which, in face of the same phrase in the next line, is obviously superfluous and unduly prolongs this line.

<sup>2</sup> The perfects here are perfects of resolution, so rightly Skinner. Budde and others omit this couplet as a gloss.

<sup>3</sup> The phrase in brackets is puzzling, and though confirmed by LXX, is omitted by most moderns as disturbing both metre and meaning. For יָבוֹשׁ, *they shall be shamed*, read with most יִלְבָּשׁ, *they shall be clothed*.

the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah, which run upon the first of these two lines, we pointed out, that, though standing in historical connection with Christ, they were not prophecies of His divinity. Lofty and expansive as were the titles they attributed to the Messiah, these titles did not imply more than an earthly ruler of extraordinary power and dignity. But we added that in the other and concurrent line of prophecy, and especially in those well-developed stages of it which appear in Isa. xl-lxvi, we should find the true Old Testament promise of the Deity in human form and tabernacling among men. We urged that, if the divinity of Christ was to be seen in the Old Testament, we should more naturally find it in the line of promise, which speaks of God Himself descending to battle and to suffer by the side of men, than in the line that lifts a human ruler almost to the right hand of God. We have now come to a passage, that gives us the opportunity of testing this connection, which we have alleged between the so-called anthropomorphism of the Old Testament, and the Incarnation, which is the glory of the New.

When God presents Himself in the Old Testament as His people's Saviour, it is not always as Isaiah mostly saw Him, in awful power and majesty—a *King high and lifted up*, or as *coming from far, burning and thick-rising smoke, and overflowing streams ; causing the peal of His voice to be heard, and the lighting down of His arm to be seen, in the fury of anger and devouring fire—bursting and torrent and hailstones*.<sup>1</sup> But in a large number of passages, of which the one before us and the famous first six verses of chap. lxiii are perhaps the most forcible, the Almighty is clothed with human passion

<sup>1</sup> Isa. vi. 1 ; xxx. 27, 30.

and agony. He is described as loving, hating, showing zeal, fear, repentance, and scorn. He bides His time, suddenly awakes to effort, and makes that effort in weakness, pain, and struggle, so extreme that He likens Himself not only to a solitary man in the ardour of battle, but to a woman in her unshareable hour of travail. To use a technical word, the prophets in their descriptions of God do not hesitate to be anthropopathic—imparting to Deity the passions of men.

In order to appreciate the full effect of this habit of the Jewish religion, we must contrast it with some principles of that religion, with which at first it seems impossible to reconcile it.

No religion, except the Christian, more necessarily implies the spirituality of God than does the Jewish. In the pages of the Old Testament, you will nowhere find this formally expressed. No Jewish prophet ever said in so many words what Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, *God is spirit*. In our own prophecy, *spirit* is frequently used, not to define the nature of God, but to express His power and the effectiveness of His will. But the Jewish Scriptures insist throughout upon the sublimity of God, or, to use their own term, His Holiness. He is the Most High, Creator, Lord,—the Force and Wisdom that are behind nature and history. It is a sin to make any image of Him; it is an error to liken Him to man. *I am God and not man, the Holy One*.<sup>1</sup> We have seen how absolutely the Divine omnipotence and sublimity are expressed by our own prophet, and we shall find Him again speaking thus: *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways,*

<sup>1</sup> Hosea xi. 9.

*and My thoughts than your thoughts.*<sup>1</sup> But perhaps the doctrine of our prophet which most effectively sets forth God's loftiness and spirituality is his doctrine of God's word. God has but to speak and a thing is created or a deed done. He calls and the agent He needs is there ; He sets His word upon him and the work is as good as finished. *My word that goeth forth out of My mouth, it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*<sup>2</sup> Omnipotence could not farther go. It would seem that all man needed from God was a word,—the giving of a command, that a thing must be.

Yet it is precisely in our prophecy, that we find the most extreme ascriptions to the Deity of personal effort, weakness, and pain. The same chapters which celebrate God's sublimity and holiness, which reveal the eternal counsels of God working to their inevitable ends in time, which also insist, as this very chapter does, that for the performance of works of mercy and morality God brings to bear the slow creative forces that are in nature, or which again (as in other chapters) attribute all to the power of His simple word,—these same Scriptures suddenly change their style and, after the most human manner, clothe the Deity in the travail and passion of flesh. Why is it, that instead of aspiring still higher from those sublime conceptions of God to some consummate expression of His unity, as for instance in Islam, or of His spirituality, as in certain modern philosophies, prophecy dashes thus thunderously down upon our hearts with the message, scattered in countless, broken words, that all this omnipotence and all this sublimity are expended and realised for men only in passion and in pain ?

<sup>1</sup> Ch. lv. 8, 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ver II..



It is no answer, which is given by many in our day, that after all the prophets were but frail men, unable to stay upon the high flight to which they sometimes soared, and obliged to sacrifice their logic to the fondness of their hearts and the general habit of man to make his god after his own image. No easy sneer like that can solve so profound a moral paradox. We must seek the solution otherwise, and earnest minds will probably find it along one or other of the two following paths.

1. The highest moral ideal is not, and never can be, the righteousness that is regnant, but that which is militant and agonising. It is the deficiency of many religions, that while representing God as the Judge and almighty executor of righteousness, they have not revealed Him as its advocate and champion as well. Christ gave us a very plain lesson upon this. As He clearly showed, when He refused the offer of all the kingdoms of the world, the highest perfection is not to be omnipotence upon the side of virtue, but to be there as patience, sympathy, and love. To will righteousness, and to rule life from above in favour of righteousness, is indeed Divine ; but if these were the highest attributes of divinity, and if they exhausted the Divine interest in our race, then man himself, with his conscience to sacrifice himself on behalf of justice or of truth,—man himself, with his instinct to make the sins of others his burden, and their purity his agonising endeavour, would indeed be higher than his God. Had Yahweh been nothing but the righteous Judge of all the earth, then His witnesses and martyrs, and His prophets who took to themselves the conscience and reproach of their people's sins, would have been as much more admirable than Himself, as the soldier who serves his country on the battle-field or lays down his

life for his people is more deserving of their gratitude and more certain of their devotion, than the king who equips him, sends him forth—and himself stays at home.

The God of the Old Testament is not such a God. In the moral warfare to which He has predestined His creatures, He Himself descends to participate. He is not abstract—that is, withdrawn—Holiness, nor mere sovereign Justice enthroned in heaven. He is One who *arises and comes down* for the salvation of men, who makes virtue His Cause and righteousness His Passion. He is no whit behind the chiefest of His servants. No seraph burns as God burns with ardour for justice ; no angel of the presence flies more swiftly than Himself to the front rank of the failing battle. The human Servant, who is pictured in our prophecy, is more absolutely identified with suffering and agonising men than any angel could be ; but even he does not stand more closely by their side, nor suffer more on their behalf, than the God who sends him forth. *For the Lord stirreth up zeal like a man of war ; in all His people's affliction He is afflicted ; against His enemies He beareth Himself as a hero.* So much from the side of righteousness.

2. But take the equally Divine attribute of love. When a religion affirms that God is love, it gives immense hostages. What is love without pity and compassion and sympathy ? and what are these but self-imposed weakness and pain ? Christ has told us of the greatest love. *Greater love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his friends ;* and the cost and sacrifice in which He thus outmatched man is one that the prophets before He came did not hesitate to impute to God. As far as human language is adequate for such a task, they picture God's love for men as

costing Him so much. He painfully pleads for His people's loyalty ; He travails in pain for their new birth and growth in holiness ; in all their affliction He is afflicted ; and He meets their stubbornness, not with the swift sentence of outraged holiness, but with long-suffering and patience, if so in the end He may win them. But the pain, that is thus essentially inseparable from love, reaches its acme, when the beloved are not only in danger but in sin, when not only the future of their holiness is uncertain, but their guilty past bars the way to any future at all. We saw how Jeremiah's love thus took upon itself the conscience and reproach of Israel's sins ; how much distress and anguish, how much sympathy and self-sacrificing labour, and at last how much hopeless endurance of the common calamity, those sins cost the noble prophet, though he might so easily have escaped it all. Now even thus does God deal with His people's sins ; not only setting them in the light of His awful countenance, but taking them upon His heart ; making them not only the object of His hate, but the anguish and the effort of His love. Jeremiah was a weak mortal, and God is the Omnipotent. Therefore, the issue of His agony shall be what His servant's never could effect, the redemption of Israel from sin ; but in sympathy and in travail the Deity, though omnipotent, is no whit behind the man.

We have said enough to prove our case, that the true Old Testament prophecy of the nature and work of Jesus Christ is found not so much in the long promise of the exalted human ruler, for whom Israel's eyes looked, as in the assurance of God's own descent to battle with His people's foes and to bear their sins. In this God, omnipotent, yet in His zeal and love capable of passion, who before the Incarnation was afflicted in

all His people's affliction, and before the Cross made their sin His burden and their salvation His agony, we see the love that was in Jesus Christ. For Jesus, too, is absolute holiness, yet not far off. He, too, is righteousness militant at our side, militant and victorious. He, too, has made our greatest suffering and shame His own problem and endeavour. He is anxious for us just where conscience bids us be most anxious about ourselves. He helps us, because He feels when we feel our helplessness the most. Never before or since in humanity has righteousness been perfectly victorious as in Him. Never before or since, in the whole range of being, has any one felt as He did all the sin of man with all the conscience of God. He claims to forgive, as God forgives; to be able to save, as we know only God can save. And the proof of these claims, apart from the experience of their fulfilment in our own lives, is that the same infinite love was in Him, the same agony and willingness to sacrifice Himself for men, which we have seen made evident in the Passion of God.

The rest of this chapter, verses 18-25, and especially 18-22, are full of difficulties. Both the metre and the logical connection are disturbed, and that by both later intrusions and perhaps some scribal omissions, for which see the footnotes to the following translation. At first, 18-21, the theme is the blindness and deafness of Israel, the Servant of Yahweh, to the *instruction* or *revelation* of his God, but then, 22-25, the sufferings of the people, plundered, captive (the *holes* and *prisons* of 22 seem to be metaphorical of captivity in general), and scorched by the fires of war. Close upon which there follow, in chap. xliii. 1-7 or 8, assurances of

their redemption, impending and already in process. The verbs in the perfect *I have redeemed, I have given* (vv. 1, 3) are 'prophetic perfects,' not records of what has been done but assurances of what is being done, or about to be done. As for verse 3—Egypt and Ethiopia did not fall to Cyrus, but Egypt did to his son Cambyses. The statement about *lands* and *peoples* in verse 4 was, of course, true of Cyrus himself. Seba, in verse 3 is Meroë, covering here the northern part of Ethiopia.<sup>1</sup>

- xlii. 18. *Ye blind, look up, that ye see,  
And hearken ye deaf.*<sup>2</sup>
19. *Who is blind but My Servants  
Or deaf as My Messenger whom I am sending?  
Who so blind as Meshullam,  
Or deaf as the Servants of Yahweh?*<sup>3</sup>
20. *Ye have seen many things but observe not,  
Though opened your ears, yet ye hear not.*
21. *[Yahweh was pleased for His righteousness' sake  
To make His revelation great and glorious.]*<sup>4</sup>
22. *'Tis a people harried and plundered  
All of them snared into holes,  
And hidden away in prisons,  
Prey they are become, with none to deliver,  
For spoil, and none to say Restore.*

<sup>1</sup> On Meroë, see vol. i, p. 227.

<sup>2</sup> With most translators, I have transposed the lines of this couplet as more suitable to the metre.

<sup>3</sup> In verse 19 I follow the LXX and some MSS. in reading not *servant*, but *servants*, of *Yahweh*, and so in verse 20; on *meshullam*, *surrendered*, or *submitted*, or *befriended*, see below. Verse 19 is regarded by many as an interpolation, and that a complicated one. They may be right. See the commentaries.

<sup>4</sup> As many have deemed, this seems the addition of a later scribe.



23. *Who among you will give ear to this,  
Attend and hearken for what is to follow ?*<sup>1</sup>
24. *Who gave up Jacob for spoil,  
And Israel to plunderers ?  
[Was it not Yahweh 'gainst whom they had  
sinned ?  
And they would not walk in His ways,  
Nor obeyed His instruction.]*<sup>2</sup>
25. *Poured out upon him the heat of His wrath,  
And the fury of war ?  
And it scorched him all round, and he knew not,  
And burned him, yet he laid not to heart.*

- x'iii. 1. *But now, thus sayeth Yahweh,  
Thy creator, O Jacob, that formed thee Israë!,  
Be not afraid, I have redeemed thee,  
I called thee by name, thou art Mine !*
2. *When thou passest through the waters, with thee  
am I,  
And the rivers*<sup>3</sup> *shall not overwhelm thee,  
When thou walkest thro' fire thou shalt not be  
scorched,  
And the flames shall not burn thee.*
3. *For I am Yahweh thy God,  
The Holy of Israel, thy Saviour.  
I have given as thy ransom Egypt,  
Ethiopia and Seba for thee.*
4. *Because thou art dear in mine eyes,  
And honoured, and thee have I loved,  
Lands*<sup>4</sup> *do I give in thy stead,  
And peoples in fee for thy life.*

<sup>1</sup> Literally *for the hereafter*.

<sup>2</sup> Again, as many think, a later pious interpolation ; it disturbs the connection between the preceding couplet and verse 25. *They had sinned*, so LXX ; Heb., *we had sinned*.

<sup>3</sup> So LXX ; Heb., *through the rivers*.

<sup>4</sup> Perhaps so, reading *'adamoith* for *'adam*, *men* (Budde and others).



- xliii. 5. *Be not afraid, for with thee am I,  
Out of the sunrise I brought in thy race,  
And from the lands of the sunset shall gather thee.*
6. *I shall say to the North, Give up,  
And to the South, Hold not back.  
Bring in my sons from afar,  
And my daughters from the end of the earth.*
7. *Everyone called by My Name,  
For My glory I did create him,  
I formed, yea I have made him.*

## CHAPTER IX

### FOUR POINTS OF A TRUE RELIGION

ISAIAH XLIII. 8—XLVIII.

WE have now surveyed the governing truths of Isa. xl—xlviii: the One God, omnipotent and righteous; the One People, His servants and witnesses to the world; the nothingness of other gods and idols before Him; the vanity and ignorance of their diviners, compared with His power, who, because He has a purpose working through all history, and is both faithful to it and almighty to bring it to pass, can inspire His prophets to declare beforehand the facts that shall be. He has brought His people into captivity for a set time, the end of which is now near. Cyrus the Persian, already upon the horizon, and threatening Babylon, is to be their deliverer. But whomever He raises up on Israel's behalf, God is always Himself their champion. Not only is His word upon them, but His heart is among them. He bears the brunt of their battle, and their deliverance, political and spiritual, is His own travail and agony. Whomever else He summons on the stage, He remains the hero of the drama.

Now, chaps. xliii—xlviii are simply the elaboration and more urgent offer of all these truths, under the sense of the rapid approach of Cyrus upon Babylon. They

declare again God's unity, omnipotence, and righteousness, they confirm His forgiveness of His people, they repeat the laughter at the idols, they give us nearer views of Cyrus, they answer the doubts that many orthodox Israelites felt about this Gentile Messiah; chaps. xlv and xlvii describe Babylon as if on the eve of her fall, and chap. xlviii, after Yahweh more urgently than ever presses upon reluctant Israel to show the results of her discipline in Babylon, closes with a call to leave the accursed city, as if the way were at last open. This call has been taken as the mark of a definite division of our prophecy. But too much must not be put upon that. It is indeed the first call to depart from Babylon; but it is not the last. And although chap. xlix, and the chapters following, speak more of Şion's Restoration and less of the Captivity, yet chap. xlix is closely connected with chap. xlviii, and we do not finally leave Babylon behind till chap. lii. 12. Nevertheless, in the meantime chap. xlviii forms a convenient point on which to keep our eyes.

Cyrus, when we last saw him, was upon the banks of the Halys, 546 B.C., startling Crœsus and the Lydian Empire into extraordinary efforts, both of a religious and political kind, to avert his attack. He had just come from an unsuccessful attempt upon the northern frontier of Babylon, and at first it appeared as if he were to find no better fortune on the western border of Lydia. In spite of his superior numbers, the Lydian army kept the ground on which he met them in battle. But Crœsus, thinking that the war was over for the season, fell back soon afterwards on Sardis, and Cyrus, following him up by forced marches, surprised him under the walls of the city, routed the famous Lydian cavalry by the novel terror of his camels, and after a siege of fourteen days sent a few soldiers to scale a side

of the citadel too steep to be guarded by the defenders ; and so Sardis, its king and empire, lay at his feet. This Lydian campaign of Cyrus, related by Herodotus, is worth noting here for the light it throws on the character of the man, whom according to our prophecy, God chose to be His chief instrument in that generation. If his turning back from Babylonia, eight years before he was granted an easy entrance to her capital, shows how patiently Cyrus could wait upon fortune, his quick march upon Sardis is the brilliant evidence that when fortune showed the way, she found this Persian a punctual follower. The Lydian campaign forms as good an illustration as we shall see of these texts of our prophet : *He pursueth them, he passeth on safely ; by a way he treads not with his feet. He cometh upon satraps as on mortar, as the potter treadeth on clay* (xli. 3, 25). *I have holden his right hand to bring down before him nations, and the loins of kings will I loosen,*—poor ungirt Cræsus, for instance, relaxing so foolishly after his victory !—*to open before him doors, and gates shall not be shut,*—so was Sardis unready for him,—*I go before thee, and will level the ridges ; doors of brass I will shiver, and bolts of iron cut in sunder. And I will give to thee treasures of darkness, hidden riches of secret places* (xlv. 1-3). Some find in this an allusion to the immense hoards of Cræsus, which fell to Cyrus with Sardis.

With Lydia, the rest of Asia Minor, including the cities of the Greeks, who held the coast of the Ægean, was bound to come into the Persian's hands. But the process of subjection turned out to be long. The Greeks got no help from Greece. Sparta sent to Cyrus an embassy with a threat, but the Persian laughed and it came to nothing. Indeed, Sparta's message was only a temptation to this irresistible warrior to carry

his fortunate arms into Europe. His own presence, however, was required in the East, and his lieutenants found the subjection of Asia Minor a task requiring several years. This cannot have been concluded before 540, and while it was in progress we understand why Cyrus did not again attack Babylonia. Meantime, he was occupied with lesser tribes to the north of Media.

Cyrus' second campaign against Babylonia opened in 539. This time he avoided the northern wall from which he had been repulsed in 546. Attacking Babylonia from the East, he defeated, at Upe (Opis), on the Tigris, an army under Belshazzar (Bil-sar-ussur) the son of King Nabunahid, then crossed the river, occupied Sippar, the king fleeing before him, and advanced on Babylon. All the world knows the Greek stories of how he took the capital without assaulting its walls, from whose impregnable height their defenders laughed down on him ; of how, in his perplexity, he bethought himself of an ancient canal or basin, and diverted therein the Euphrates from its natural course through the city ; and of how, before the Babylonians had time to notice the dwindling of the waters, his soldiers waded down the river-bed and through the river-gates, and surprised the careless garrison and populace on a night of festival <sup>1</sup> Of this, however, the contemporary Babylonian record says nothing, but simply states that the soldiers of Cyrus, under his general Gubaru, ' entered Babylon without fighting,' and gives the date as the 16th Tishri (October), only two days after the occupation of Sippar, the year being 538 B.C. Nabunahid still

<sup>1</sup> Herodotus, Bk. I, 191 ; and with variations Xenophon, *Cyropædia*, Bk. VII, ch. v, where the same general, called Gobryas, is mentioned as Cyrus names in his inscription ; see next note.

fled ; clearly it was his disaffected subjects who joyfully surrendered their capital to the invader.<sup>1</sup>

Now it was during the course of the events just sketched, but before their culmination in the fall of Babylon, that chaps. xliii–xlvi were composed. That at least, is what they suggest. In three passages, which deal with Cyrus or with Babylon, some of the verbs are in the past, some in the future. Those in the past tense describe the calling and full career of Cyrus or the beginning of preparations against Babylon. Those in the future promise Babylon's fall or the release of the Jews. Thus, in chap. xliii. 14 it is written : *For your sakes I send to Babylon, and will bring down as fugitives all of them, and the Chaldeans in the ships of their rejoicing (?)*<sup>2</sup> Surely these words announce, that Babylon's fate was already on the way to her, but not yet arrived. Again, in the verses which deal with Cyrus himself, xlv. 1–6, the Persian is already *grasped by his right hand by God, and called* ; but his career is not over, for God promises to do various things for him. The third passage is ver. 13 of the same chapter, where Yahweh says, *I have stirred him up in righteousness, and, changing to the future tense, all his ways will I level ; he shall build My city, and My captivity shall he send away*. What more precise than the tenor of all these passages ? If people would only take our prophet at his word ; if with their belief in the inspiration of the text of Scripture, they

<sup>1</sup> The so-called 'Annalistic Tablet' in the British Museum. The relevant lines of this are given by Driver in his *Daniel* (Camb. Bible), p. xxix ; see also Ball, *Light from the Ancient East*. Nor does Berōsus (quoted by Josephus, *Contra Apionem*, i. 20), who had access to Babylonian records, say anything about the diversion of the river. *Cyropædia*, VII. v, 32, says that Gadatas and Gobryas did homage to the gods who had avenged themselves on the impious (ἀνόσιος) king.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 162 note 2.



would pay attention to its grammar, which surely, on their theory, is also sacred, then there would be no question about the date of these chapters. As plainly as grammar can enable it, this prophecy speaks of Cyrus' campaign against Babylon as already begun, but of its completion as future. Chap. xlviii, it is true, assumes events as still farther developed, but we come to this afterwards.

During Cyrus' preparations, then, for invading Babylonia, and in prospect of her certain fall, chaps. xliii-xlviii repeat with greater detail and impetuosity the truths, which we have already gathered from chaps. xl-xlii.

1. And first of these comes naturally the omnipotence, righteousness, and personal urgency of God Himself. Everything is again assured by His power and purpose ; everything starts from His initiative. To illustrate this we could quote from almost every verse in the chapters under consideration. *I, I Yahweh, and none beside Me a Saviour. I am God—El. Also from to-day on I am He.*<sup>1</sup> *I will work, and who shall let it ? I, I am He who blot out thy transgressions. I First, and I Last ; beside Me there is no God—Elohim. Is there a God, Eloah, beside Me ? yea, there is no Rock ; I know not any. I Yahweh, Maker of all things. I am Yahweh, and there is none else ; beside Me no God. Former of light and Creator of darkness, Maker of weal and Creator of bale ; God-Righteous, El Şaddîk, and a Saviour : there is none except Me. Face Me, and be saved all ends of the earth ; for I am God, El, and there is none else. Only in Yahweh—of Me shall they say—are righteousnesses and strength. I am God, El, and there is none else ; God, Elohim, and there is none like Me. I am He ; I*

<sup>1</sup> *From to-day on*, Ez. xlviii. 35 ; but others take it *Also to-day I am He*.

*am First, yea, I am Last. I, I have spoken. I have declared it.*

It is of advantage to gather together so many passages—and they might have been increased—from chaps. xliii–xlviii. They let us see at a glance what a part the first personal pronoun plays in the Divine revelation. Beneath every religious truth is the unity of God. Behind every great movement is the personal initiative and urgency of God. And revelation is, in its essence, not the mere publication of truths about God, but the personal presence and communication to men of God Himself. Three words are used for Deity—El, Eloah, Elohim—exhausting the Divine terminology. But besides these, there is a formula which puts the point even more sharply: *I am He*. The habit of the Hebrews, and indeed of all Semitic peoples, who shared their reverent unwillingness to name the Deity, was to speak of Him simply by the third personal pronoun. The Book of Job is full of instances of the habit, and it also appears in many proper names, as Eli-hu, ‘My-God-is-He,’ Abi-hu, ‘My-Father-is-He.’ Renan adduces the practice as evidence that the Semites were ‘naturally monotheistic,’<sup>1</sup>—as evidence for what was never the case! But if there was no original Semitic monotheism for this practice to prove, we may yet take the practice as evidence for the personality of the Hebrew God. The God of the prophets is not the *it*, which Matthew Arnold curiously thought he had identified in their writings, and which, in language that

<sup>1</sup> Renan’s theory of the ‘natural monotheism’ of the Semites was first published in his *Histoire des Langues Semitiques* some seventy years ago. Nearly every Semitic scholar of repute found occasion to refute it. But Renan’s charming genius for neglecting facts that disturb an artistic arrangement of his subject ignores the overwhelming evidence against the natural monotheism of the Semite, and repeats his theory modified in his *Histoire du Peuple d’Israel*, i. 31 (1888).

unsophisticated Orientals would never have understood, he so cumbrously named 'a tendency not ourselves that makes for righteousness.' Not anything like this is the God, who here urges His self-consciousness upon men. He says, *I am He*,—the unseen Power about whom, when in their terror and ignorance His worshippers sought to describe Him, they assumed that He was a Person, and called Him, as they would have called one of themselves, by a personal pronoun. By the mouth of His prophet this vague and awful *He* declares Himself as *I, I, I*,—no mere tendency, but a living Heart and urgent Will, personal character and force of initiative, from which all tendencies move and take their direction and strength. *I am He*.

History is strewn with the errors of those, who have sought from God something else than Himself. All the degradation, even of the highest religions, has sprung from this, that their votaries forgot that religion was a communion with God Himself, a life in the power of His character and will, and employed it as the mere communication either of material benefits or of intellectual ideas. It has been the mistake of millions to see in revelation nothing but the telling of fortunes, the recovery of lost things, decision in quarrels, direction in war, or the bestowal of some personal favour. Such are like the person who saw nothing in Christ but the recoverer of a bad debt : *Master, speak unto my brother that he divide the inheritance with me* ; and their superstition is as far from true faith as the prodigal's heart, when he said, *Give me the portion of goods that falleth unto me*, was from the other heart, when, in his poverty and woe, he cast himself upon his Father : *I will arise and go to my Father*. But no less a mistake do those make, who seek from God not Himself, but only intellectual information. The first Reformers did well, who

brought the common soul to the personal grace of God ; but many of their successors, in a controversy, whose dust obscured the sun and allowed them to see but the length of their own weapons, used Scripture chiefly as a store of proofs for separate doctrines of the faith, and forgot that God Himself was there at all. And though in these days we seek from the Bible many desirable things, such as history, philosophy, morals, formulas of assurance of salvation, the forgiveness of sins, maxims for conduct, yet all these will avail us little, until we have found behind them the living Character, the Will, the Grace, the Urgency, the Almighty Power, by trust in whom and communion with whom alone all they are added unto us.

2. The God of Israel, who in these chapters claims to be the One, Sovereign God, founds His claims first upon His control, prediction, and interpretations of History. His proofs are given in the form of a trial or argument, to which His own people are called to bear witness before other nations to His Words and Deeds in their own past (xliii. 8—xliv. 8, 21, 22). The Words and the Deeds go together : *I have published* (or *made heard* or *announced*) *and I have saved* (xliii. 12), verbs frequently repeated in conjunction. And the other nations are challenged to produce any like *publishing* among themselves : *Who among them was giving us predictions to be heard ? Let them offer their witnesses* (xliii. 9) ; *Who is like Me ? Let him stand forth and tell it, and lay it in order before Me* (xliv. 7). The *publishing* or *making heard* is, of course, the *predicting* of which chap. xli spoke—the proclaiming in former times of things which in due sequence have happened since or are happening now ; but also the proclaiming now of things still to happen. Of the first of these—*I foretold and I saved, when no strange god was among you, and*

*ye are My witnesses* (xliii. 12)—an instance is given in the Deliverance from Egypt (xliii. 16); but the exiles are called *not to remember these former things* (*ri'shônôth*) *nor dwell on the things of old*, for *I do a new thing, even now it springs up, shall ye not acknowledge it?*—that is the preparation of a way through the desert for their return (xliii. 18–20), and Babylon's impending fall has already been announced (ver. 14). Thus Yahweh alone is God, because alone directly effective in history, and because He has proclaimed beforehand what He will do; the immediate instance of which is the liberation which He is providing for His people through the overthrow of Babylon by Cyrus. Later on we shall find the unambiguous and straightforward character of His Words and Actions emphasised in xlv. 19–25: *Never in secret I spake nor said to Jacob, Seek Me in chaos, I am Yahweh who speak the truth* (lit. *righteousness*) *declaring things straightforward. . . . Who announced this of old? Was it not I? No God but Myself, God righteous*—consistent and true to His word—*Saviour was none but Me* (the same as in xliii. 12). *Only in Yahweh are righteousnesses*—either actual *vindications* or *fidelities* to His ancient purposes—and *strength* to carry these out in history.

We may now take the main part of this historical argument for the Uniqueness of Yahweh's Godhead as we find it in xliii. 8–21, and then in their order the oracles which mix with it the moral character of His dealings with men (xliii. 22–xliv. 8, along with vv. 21 f.); and then the exposure (xliv. 9–20), of the futility of the idols and senselessness of their makers, which, whether by our prophet himself or another, add to the historical and the moral proofs of Israel's religion the consciousness of an intellectual superiority to other religions, as evidenced in the irony and scorn of the exposure.



- xliii. 8. *Bring forward the people blind, but with eyes,  
The deaf that have ears !<sup>1</sup>*
9. *All the nations are gathered together,  
And the peoples assembled.<sup>2</sup>  
Who among them could have foretold this,  
And predictions have given us to hear ?<sup>3</sup>  
Let them offer their witnesses and prove to be  
right,  
That we may hear, and say, ' Truth ! ' <sup>4</sup>*
10. *Ye are My witnesses—Yahweh's Rede<sup>5</sup>  
My servants whom I have chosen,  
To the end ye<sup>6</sup> may own and believe Me,  
And discern I am He.  
Before Me no god was formed,<sup>7</sup>  
And after Me none shall be.*
11. *I even I am Yahweh,  
And beside Me no Saviour.*
12. *I, I foretold, and have saved,  
I made it heard and no stranger<sup>8</sup> among you,  
And ye are My witnesses—Yahweh's Rede—<sup>5</sup>  
And I am God,<sup>9</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> This verse has been removed by Haupt, Box, and Moffatt to before xlii. 18, on the ground that here it is isolated. This is not so; the presence of Israel is required by what follows.

<sup>2</sup> In this couplet the text gives only the first verb in the perfect, but by a slight change of vowel-points the second may be conformed to it.

<sup>3</sup> In this couplet *foretold* or *declared this* refers to the preceding prophecy, vv. 1-7; *predictions* again *ri'shônôth*.

<sup>4</sup> In this couplet *prove to be right* is lit. *be righteous or justified*. *That we may hear*—so, rightly, Cheyne and others; but Heb., *that they, i.e., the witnesses*, is possible (Duhm); or that *they cause to hear* (Budde).

<sup>5</sup> Duhm followed by others alters the reading to *my trusty ones*.

<sup>6</sup> Some would alter to *they*, the Gentiles.

<sup>7</sup> Probably in allusion to the clause in the Babylonian Creation-Epic: 'then were the gods formed.'<sup>8</sup> That is, *strange god*.

<sup>9</sup> Budde, Duhm, and Cheyne (with others) suggest the addition *from of old* to fill up the metre and form an antithesis to next line, *On from to-day*.



- xliii. 13. *Also from to-day I am He.  
And none from My Hand can deliver.  
I do the work and who shall reverse it ?*

This new work *from to-day* onward is then described in the following strophes, the defeat of Babylon for Israel's sake, and this people's exodus, to be so miraculously conducted across the deserts that to recall their ancient exodus will no longer be needful. The text of the first strophe is uncertain, and several emendations have been proposed, but is not so corrupt as many think, and in particular the reference to the flight of the Chaldean fugitives down the river may be retained in view of what we are told by Herodotus (I, 194) of the Babylonian boats, and what is found on the Cylinder Inscription of Cyrus.

14. *Thus sayeth Yahweh,  
Your Redeemer, the Holy of Israel,  
For your sake I send unto Babel,  
And will bring down as fugitives all of them,<sup>1</sup>  
And the Khasdim in the ships of their joy-  
aunce (?)<sup>2</sup>*
15. *I Yahweh, your Holy,  
Creator of Israel, your King !*
16. *Thus sayeth Yahweh,<sup>3</sup>  
Who setteth a way through the sea,  
Through the mighty waters a path,*

But the emphasis intended is all the greater because the phrase **stands** alone, and the line is left short.

<sup>1</sup> So LXX.

<sup>2</sup> For *ships* some by a change of points would read *lamentations*.

<sup>3</sup> Duhm, Cheyne, Box suppose a line to be missing here.

17. *Who bringeth forth the chariots and horse,  
The hosts and the forces<sup>1</sup> together,  
Down they lie, they cannot arise,  
Extinguished, quenched like a wick.*
18. *Remember no more the former things,  
Nor dwell on the things of old ;*
19. *Behold I am doing a new thing,  
Even now it springs, do ye not own it ?  
Yea I will set through the desert a way,  
And streams in the waste.*
20. *The beasts of the field shall respect Me,  
The jackals and ostriches.  
For<sup>2</sup> water I give in the desert,  
And streams in the waste,  
To give drink to My people, My chosen,*
21. *This people I have formed for Myself ;  
My praise shall they tell.*

3. The next strophes lift the Divine action from the realm of power to the realm of grace. Israel cannot attribute their approaching redemption to their own efforts to propitiate God by ritual, for in fact all sacrifice and offering have been impossible to them during the Exile, and the only effects the people have had upon God have been their sins and iniquities ; and this not in their Exile alone but from their origins as a people and among all their classes : their ancestor, spiritual leaders, and princes. All that was what brought them *under the ban* and to Exile, xliii. 22-28. Thus we enter upon the third of the truths of a true religion,

<sup>1</sup> These military terms are all collectives : for the last the Heb. *i strong one*, or just our *force* or *forces*.

<sup>2</sup> Some omit from here on till the end of 21 as redundant.

the moral, including conviction and punishment of sin with forgiveness and salvation by the free grace of God. I see no reason for omitting with Marti and others verses 25, 26.

- xliii. 22. *But not upon Me hast thou called, O Jacob ;  
Nor <sup>1</sup> put thee to trouble for Me, Israel.*
23. *Thou hast brought Me no sheep <sup>2</sup> as thy holo-  
causts ;  
Nor with sacrifices of thine hast thou honoured  
Me.  
Nor have I made thee to slave with meal-offerings,  
Nor thee have I wearied for incense.*
24. *Thou hast not bought Me sweet cane with money,  
Nor with fat of thy sacrifices sated Me.  
Only with thy sins thou hast made Me to slave  
And worn Me out with thy crimes.*
25. *I, I am He who blots out thy rebellions,  
[For Mine own sake] <sup>3</sup> thy sins I remember no  
more.*
26. *Put Me in mind, plead we together ;  
Reckon thou up, if so thou be right.<sup>4</sup>*
27. *Thy first father sinned,<sup>5</sup>  
Thy mediators revolted against Me,  
Thy princes profaned My Sanctuary ; <sup>6</sup>*
28. *So I gave up Jacob to the ban  
And Israel to reviling.*

<sup>1</sup> So LXX.

<sup>2</sup> The Heb. word means any small cattle.

<sup>3</sup> Many codices of LXX omit this ; yet cod. B has it.

<sup>4</sup> Again, the verb from the root sedek. See above, ver. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Here a line may have dropped out.

<sup>6</sup> So from signs in the LXX Klostermann, Cheyne, Whitehouse, Box. Heb., I will profane the princes of the Sanctuary.

Declarations of the Sovereignty of God and their proofs from His control and interpretation of history are not enough if they include no appeals to man's moral sense, and did He not concern Himself with sin, and had for it neither rebuke nor purpose of pardon. The above lines and others from our prophet, xl. 1, xlv. 22, l. 1-3, lv. 6, 7, along with some later additions, xlviii. 8b-10, 18, 19 (that sad might-have-been !), 22, supply those essentials of a true religion. They proclaim doom for sin, and mercy for the sinner who turns from his wicked ways. They lift the prophecy from a mere manifesto for the occasion, declaring captive Israel's liberation, to a gospel for all time. God is Omnipotent yet can do nothing for men till they put away their sins. These, and not inability to perform a due ritual, are His heavy concern. And His free grace is not only to release from the servitude to which sin has brought them, but, if they will turn, to forget and forgive the sins themselves. Now when we remember who the God is, who thus speaks—that He grants His pardon not merely from the height of His Majesty, but from the midst of His own passion under the weight of His people's blindness and sin—with what force His Word comes home to our hearts, what conscience of a trust and an obligation is quickened within us ! One understands why Ambrose sent Augustine to these chapters after his conversion.

There follow renewed assurances of the promises already given, and a return to the affirmation of the sole Deity of Israel's God, as the Ordainer and Interpreter of history.

- xliv. 1. *Now hearken, O Jacob, My Servant ;  
And Israel whom I have chosen,*  
2. *Thus saith Yahweh Who made thee,*

*And formed thee from birth, He shall help thee,  
Fear not, O Jacob, My Servant,  
And Jeshurun,<sup>1</sup> whom I have chosen.*

- xliv. 3. *For water will I pour on the thirsty,  
And over the dry ground rills.*

*I will pour on thy seed My Spirit,  
And My Blessing upon thine offspring.*

4. *They shall spring like grass amidst waters,<sup>2</sup>  
As willows on channels of water,*

5. *This one shall say I am Yahweh's,  
And this one be called <sup>3</sup> by Jacob's name,  
And this inscribe on his hand For-Yahweh,  
And surnamed be <sup>4</sup> by the name of Israel.*

6. *Thus saith Yahweh, Israel's King,  
His Redeemer, Yahweh of Hosts,  
I am the First and I am the Last,  
God is there none beside Me.*

7. *Who is like Me? Let him stand <sup>5</sup> and call,  
And tell it and lay it before Me.  
Who from of old made heard <sup>6</sup> things to be,  
And what are to come can openly tell us? <sup>7</sup>*

8. *Tremble not, nor alarm yourselves;  
Did I from of old not let you <sup>6</sup> hear,*

<sup>1</sup> Some Heb. MSS., LXX, Syriac, and Targum read *Israel*.

<sup>2</sup> So LXX followed by most moderns.

<sup>3</sup> Passive, so Syriac; Heb. *shall call*.

<sup>4</sup> In Arabic the same root expresses the taking of a family surname as  
a title of honour.

<sup>5</sup> So LXX.

<sup>6</sup> So Oort, Duhm, Skinner, etc., by a slight re-division of consonants

<sup>7</sup> *Let them foretell us*; Heb. *them*, LXX, *you*, Targ. *us*.

*And openly told?—and ye are My witnesses.*

*Is there a God besides Myself?*

*Or <sup>1</sup> a Rock—I know none at all.*

4. A burst of laughter sounds weirdly from the Exile. But we have seen the right the prophet had to irony and scorn. His people were monotheists, and their captors idolaters. Even in its rudest forms monotheism raises men intellectually—it is difficult to say by how many degrees. Indeed, degrees do not measure the mental difference between the idolater and him who worships with all his mind as well as his heart one God. Israel were conscious of this and, therefore, though their hearts were heavy with sorrow, their faces carried a scorn they had right to wear as servants of the One God. This scorn breaks forth in the following verses. Whether these are from our prophet himself or, as some recent critics think, from another hand than his, does not matter; they are consonant with his present theme, as with the temper in which he has already spoken of idols and their makers. In parts the text is corrupt, and for us hardly possible to be read in a regular metre. But evident is the sense of intellectual superiority; and probably the abrupt force and impetuous, unequal lines are due to the passion of scorn which possesses the author—whoever he may have been.

9. *Formers of idols are all of them waste,  
And their darlings but worthless,  
The worshippers of these neither see,  
Nor have they the wit to feel shame.*

10. *Who ever fashioned a god, or image did cast,  
But 'twas sure to be worthless?*

<sup>1</sup> Reading **אין** for **אין**



xliv. 11. *Lo, all its spell-binders<sup>1</sup> are baffled,  
The workmen were merely men,  
Let them all get together, stand up ;  
Together they tremble abashed.*

12. *The worker in iron . . . an axe (?)<sup>2</sup>  
And works with hot coals,  
And with hammer he shapes it,  
Works it up by the strength of his arm.  
Anon he is hungry, his strength is gone,  
He drinks no water, and then is faint.*

13. *The worker in wood draws out a line,  
Marks<sup>3</sup> it with pencil, shapes it with planes,  
With compasses marks he and shapes it,<sup>4</sup>  
Like the build of a man and human in grace  
—To inhabit a house !<sup>5</sup>*

14. . . .<sup>6</sup> *to hew him down cedars,  
Or he chooses<sup>7</sup> a plane<sup>8</sup> or an oak,  
[And keeps strong for himself the trees of the  
woodland.]<sup>9</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> So by changing the vowel-points, which in the text yield the term *allies* or *fellows* ; Duhm points *its spells*, and for *workmen* in the next line reads *enchantments* ; Cheyne, *its charmers*, *its enchanters*. For *of* (merely) *men* Duhm reads *confounded*. LXX confirms the Hebrew text.

<sup>2</sup> This line is uncertain. LXX supplies a verb *has sharpened the iron*, *with an axe wrought it*, and *with a borer bored it*. Duhm, Skinner, and Box take *axe* as a gloss on *iron*, and retain only *the smith works with the coals*.

<sup>3</sup> Cheyne and Haupt read another verb, *determined* (*S.B.O.T.*).

<sup>4</sup> With Budde and Duhm most omit this line as a scribe's variant on the preceding one.

<sup>5</sup> That is with a house of its own, as if it were a real person.

<sup>6</sup> A verb seems missing. Marti proposes *he is gone*. Some attach the rest of the line to the preceding.

<sup>7</sup> So Marti and others for *takes*.

<sup>8</sup> Reading תרזה, xli. 19, for תרזה not found elsewhere ; A.V. *cypress*, R.V. *holm tree*.

<sup>9</sup> Some omit this line as interpolated.

*That the Lord<sup>1</sup> hath planted, the rain makes great.*

15. *To be fuel for men,  
And he kindles thereof and warms him,  
He fires it up and bakes bread,  
Yea works it into a god, and reveres it,  
Has made it an image, and bows down<sup>2</sup> before it.*
16. *Part of it he burns in the fire,  
Upon part he roasts<sup>3</sup> flesh,  
Eats<sup>3</sup> roast and is satisfied.  
Yea warms himself, says, Aha !  
I am warm, and gloat<sup>4</sup> on the heat.*
17. *And the rest thereof to a god he has made,  
To an image, and<sup>5</sup> bowed himself to it ;  
Worships and prays to it, saying,  
O save me, my god art thou !*
18. *No wit have they, and cannot discern,  
For their eyes are<sup>6</sup> besmeared from seeing,  
From understanding their minds.*
19. *And none will bring back to mind—  
No wit nor discerning to say—  
Half I burnt in the fire,  
Yea, bread I have baked on its coals,  
Roast flesh and am eating.  
And the rest shall I make a Disgust,  
And bow to the trunk of a tree ?*
20. *Feeder on ashes ! a duped heart has turned him,  
That he cannot deliver himself, nor say,  
Is there not in my right hand a fraud ?*

<sup>1</sup> LXX κυριος, reading אֲדֹנָי for the אֱלֹהִים of the text, which the Massoretes themselves thought doubtful.

<sup>2</sup> An Aramaic word.

<sup>3</sup> Thus Oort and others transpose rightly these two verbs.

<sup>4</sup> Literally, *look at*.

<sup>5</sup> Reading the *vav*, the last letter of the previous word, with this verb.

<sup>6</sup> Reading, with Duhm and others, the plural מְעֵינֵם for the singular מְעֵינִי in the text.

The Voice of God now resumes His direct appeal to His own people, in immediate continuation of vv. 6–8, the contents of which are referred to in the first line as *these things*, and repeats the assurance of pardon given in xliii. 23. The third and fourth lines are taken by Marti and Box as redundant, and a later addition. With Duhm I retain them as the prophet's own, as well as the seventh line ; for I must say once more, that it is unreasonable to suppose that in poems which mainly consist of couplets a Hebrew poet never added to these an odd line. And in this case, as we have found in others, the odd line is both a suitable climax to the couplets before it and is metrical and musical.

- xliv. 21. *Remember these things, O Jacob,  
And Israel, for thou art My Servant,  
I formed thee, My Servant thou art.  
Israel ! Thou wilt not renounce Me !*<sup>1</sup>  
22. *Away have I swept as a mist thy rebellions,  
And thy sins as a cloud.  
Return thou to Me, for I have redeemed thee.*

Finally, at the end of this section of prophecy, the prophet breaks forth, as he often does, into a song of praise ; three couplets of a regular metre and sound text. In the first line the Hebrew verb is simply *hath done*, the prophetic perfect.

23. *Ring out, O heavens, for Yahweh His work  
hath done.*<sup>2</sup>  
*Shout, O ye deeps of the earth !*

<sup>1</sup> Reading with Cheyne and Haupt (*S.B.O.T.*) by change of one letter, תַּנְשֵׁנִי for תַּמְשֵׁנִי ; LXX μή ἐπιλανθάνου μου.

<sup>2</sup> Klostermann suggests the reading *hath saved* ; so, too, Box ; LXX has ἠλέησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν Ἰσραήλ.

*Break forth, O hills, into singing,  
O forest, and every tree in it !  
For Yahweh hath redeemed Jacob,  
And in Israel makes Himself glorious.*

Thus, backward and forward, yesterday, to-day, and for ever, the hand of Israel's God is upon history. He controls it : it is the fulfilment of His ancient purpose. By predictions made long ago and fulfilled to-day, by the readiness to predict to-day what will happen to-morrow, He is surely God and God alone. Singular fact, that in that day of great empires, confident in their resources, and with the future so near their grasp, it should be the God of a little people, cut off from their history, servile and seemingly spent, who should take the big things of earth—Egypt, Ethiopia, Seba—and speak of them as counters to be given in exchange for His people ; who should speak of such a people as the chief heirs of the future, the indispensable ministers of mankind. The claim has two Divine features. It is unique, and history has vindicated it. It is unique : no other religion, in that or in any other time, has so articulately explained past history or laid out the ages to come upon the lines of a purpose so definite, so rational, so beneficent—a purpose so worthy of the One God and Creator of all. And it has been vindicated : Israel returned to their own land, resumed the development of their calling, and, after the centuries came and went, fulfilled the promise that they should be the religious teachers of mankind. The long delay of this fulfilment surely but testifies the more to the Divine foresight of the promise ; to the patience, which nature, as well as history, reveals to be, as much as omnipotence, a mark of Deity.

These, then, are the four essentials of a true religion,

upon which the religion of Israel offers itself as such. *First*, it is the power of the character and grace of a personal God. *Second*, it claims for Him the control and interpretation of history, and history has justified the claim. *Third*, it is intensely moral, enforcing conviction and judgement of sin and revealing God's chief concern as being to rescue man from this and His free grace to forgive all who turn from sin. And *fourth*, it speaks with a high intellectual confidence, whereof one of the marks is the scorn it pours on the idols, and its exposure of the witlessness of their makers and worshippers.

## CHAPTER X

### CYRUS

ISAIAH XLI. 2, 25 ; XLIV. 28-XLV. 13 ; XLVI. 11 ; XLVIII. 14, 15

CYRUS, the Persian, is the only man outside the covenant and people of Israel, who is yet entitled the LORD'S Shepherd, and the LORD'S Messiah or Christ. He is, besides, the only great personality, of whom both the Bible and Greek literature treat at length and with sympathy. Did we know nothing more of him than this, the heathen who received the most sacred titles of Revelation, the one man in history who was the cynosure of both Greece and Judah, could not fail to be of the greatest interest to us. But apart from the way, in which he impressed the Greek imagination and was interpreted by Hebrew faith, we have an amount of historical evidence about Cyrus, which, if it dissipates the beautiful legends told of his origin and his end, confirms some of what is written of his character by Herodotus and Xenophon, and all of what is described as his career by the prophet whom we are studying. Whether of his own virtue, or as being the leader of a new race of men at the fortunate moment of their call, Cyrus lifted himself, from the lowest of royal stations, to a conquest and an empire achieved by only two or three others in the history of the world. Originally but the prince of Anshan, or



Anzan,<sup>1</sup>—a territory of uncertain size lying north of Elam,—he brought under his sway, by policy or war, the large and vigorous nations of the Medes and Persians ; he overthrew the Lydian kingdom, and subjugated Asia Minor ; he so impressed the beginnings of Greek life, that, with all their own great men, the Greeks never ceased to regard this Persian as the ideal king ; he captured Babylon, the throne of the ancient East, and thus effected the transfer of empire from the Semitic to the Aryan stock. He also satisfied, by his rule, the peoples, whom he had subdued, and he organised his realms with a thoroughness unequalled over so vast an extent till the rise of the Roman Empire.

We have little contemporary or nearly contemporary evidence about his personality. But his achievements testify to extraordinary genius, and his character was the admiration of all antiquity. Greek literature sets him forth as the model for education in childhood, self-restraint in youth, just and powerful government in manhood. Most of what we read of him in Xenophon's *Cyropædia* is romance ; but the very fact, that, like our own King Arthur, Cyrus was used as a mirror to flash great ideals down the ages, proves that there was with him native brilliance and width of surface as well as fortunate eminence of position. He owed much to the virtue of his race. The Persians of those days impressed their enemies with their truthfulness, purity, and vigour. But the man, who not only led such a nation and was their darling, but combined under his sceptre, in equal discipline and contentment, so many other and diverse peoples, so many powerful and ambitious rulers, cannot have been merely the best speci-

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 113, n. 3.

men of his own nation's virtue, but must have added to this, at least much of the original qualities—humanity, breadth of mind, sweetness, patience and genius for managing men—which his sympathetic biographer imputes to him in so heroic a degree. It is evident that the *Cyropædia* is ignorant of many facts about Cyrus, and must have taken conscious liberties with many more, but nobody—who, on the one hand, is aware of what Cyrus effected upon the world, and who, on the other, can appreciate that it was possible for a foreigner (who, nevertheless, had travelled through most of the scenes of Cyrus' career) to form this rich conception of him more than a century after his death—can doubt that the Persian's character (due allowance being made for hero-worship) must have been in the main as Xenophon describes it.

Yet it is very remarkable that our Scripture states not one moral or religious virtue as the qualification of this Gentile to the title of *Yahweh's Anointed* or *Messiah*. We search here in vain for any gleam of appreciation of that character, which drew the admiring eyes of Greece. Our prophet does not apply to Cyrus a single adjective expressing a moral quality. The *righteousness*, which many passages associate with his name, is attributed, not to him, but to God's calling of him, and does not imply justice or any similar quality, but is, as we shall afterwards see when we examine the remarkable use of this word in Second Isaiah, a mixture of good faith and thoroughness, all-rightness.<sup>1</sup> The one passage of

<sup>1</sup> The parallel which Professor Sayce draws (*Fresh Light from the Ancient Monuments*, p. 147) between the statement of the Cyrus Cylinder that Cyrus 'governed in justice and righteousness, and was righteous in hand and heart,' and Isaiah xlv. 13, *Yahweh raised him up in righteousness*, is therefore unreal; for in Isaiah xlv. 13 *righteousness* neither is used of Cyrus, nor signifies the civic virtues which it does on the Cylinder

our prophet in which some have supposed that Israel's God makes a religious claim to Cyrus, as though he were a monotheist—*he calleth on My Name*—<sup>1</sup> is too uncertain both in text and meaning to have anything built upon it. Indeed, no Hebrew could have praised the faith of this Persian who styled himself 'the servant of Marduk,' and in his public proclamations to the Babylonians ascribed to Marduk his call to enter Babylon, and his peaceful occupation of the city, and who boasted of his care for the worship of Marduk and other Babylonian deities.<sup>2</sup> Cyrus was probably the pious ruler whom Xenophon, and, in fact, his own inscriptions describe, but he was no monotheist. And our prophet denies him any knowledge of Israel's God in words too plain to be misunderstood—*I called thee though thou knewest Me not . . . thee do I gird though thou hast not known Me* (xlv. 4, 5).

On what, then, is the Divine election of Cyrus grounded by our prophet, if not upon his character or his faith? Simply and barely upon the sovereignty and will of Israel's God: *I am Yahweh, Maker of all . . . Who say of Koresh, My Shepherd, and all My*

<sup>1</sup> Ch. xli. 25. See above, p. 123, n. 2, and p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> The following are extracts from the translation of the Cylinder of Cyrus by L. W. King in *Enc. Bibl.*, col. 453: 'He (*i.e.*, Marduk) sought out a righteous prince after his own heart, whom he might take by the hand; Cyrus, king of Anshān, he called by his name, for empire over the whole world he proclaimed his title . . . Marduk the great lord, protector of his people, beheld his upright deeds and his righteous heart with joy. To his city of Babylon he commanded him to go, like a friend and helper he went by his side. . . . Without contest and battle he made him enter into Babylon his city.' And Cyrus himself declares, 'Marduk the great Lord [inclined] the great heart of the sons of Babylon to me, and daily do I care for his worship. . . . And the gods of Sumer and Akkad which Nabunahid had brought into Babylon, at the word of Marduk, the great lord, one and all in their own shrines did I cause to take up the habitation of their heart's delight. May all the gods whom I have brought into their own cities pray daily before Bel and Nabu for the lengthening of my days,' etc.

*purpose shall he accomplish.* Cyrus is Yahweh's; because all things are Yahweh's of whatsoever character they be, in nature or in history; they are from Him and for His ends. But what end is dearer to Him, what has He more clearly announced than that His own people Israel shall be redeemed from exile and settled again in their land, and that their holy city Jerusalem be rebuilt and inhabited? For this He will use the fittest force, and such is Cyrus, whom therefore He declares to be His *Anointed*, or *Messiah*, and has called by his name *for the sake of His servant Jacob and Israel His chosen*.

All this is set forth in the following connected passages (xliv. 24–xlv. 8), of which in the first, addressed to Israel, Yahweh proclaims Himself their Redeemer, in accordance with promises He has already sent them by his servants, and Cyrus is to fulfil these (xliv. 24–28); but in the second, addressed to Cyrus himself, Yahweh calls the Persian to his work, promises him equipment, treasure, and an open path to victory—all to the end that men may know Him as the true God, Creator of all (xlv. 1–7); and there is added a call to the heavens and the earth to shower down and bring forth His righteousness (xlv. 8).

- xliv. 24. *Thus sayeth Yahweh, thy Redeemer,  
That formed thee from the womb :  
I am Yahweh, the Maker of all,  
Stretching out the heavens alone,  
Spreading the earth—who was with Me ?*<sup>1</sup>
25. *Confounding the omens of mutterers,*<sup>2</sup>  
*And making diviners look foolish.*

<sup>1</sup> Or, with other points, *by Myself*.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *baddîm*, usually understood as *idle talkers*, *praters*, but rendered here by LXX *ἐνγαστριμύθων*. Others read *barîm*, *soothsayers*.

*Turning the wiseacres down,<sup>1</sup>  
And their knowledge to folly.*

- xliv. 26. *Establishing the word of His servants,<sup>2</sup>  
And fulfilling His messengers' counsel ;<sup>3</sup>  
Saying of Jerusalem, Let her be peopled,  
Of the cities of Judah, Let them be built,  
And her ruins I will raise ;*  
27. *Saying to the deep, Be dry,  
Thy streams do I parch ;*  
28. *Saying of Cyrus, My Shepherd,<sup>4</sup>  
He shall fulfil all My purpose.*

*Yea saying of Jerusalem, Let her be built,  
Of the Temple, Let it be founded.<sup>5</sup>*

- xliv. 1. *Thus sayeth Yahweh, the God,<sup>6</sup>  
To His anointed, to Cyrus,  
Whom by his right hand I grasp,  
To bring down <sup>7</sup> nations before him,  
And loosen the loins of Kings,<sup>8</sup>  
To open before him doors,  
And that gates shall not be closed,*  
2. *I, I will go before thee  
And will level the mountains,  
Shatter the gates of bronze,  
And sunder the iron bars.*

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *back*.

<sup>2</sup> So LXXA and Targum ; Heb. *servant*.

<sup>3</sup> Budde : *fulfilling his counsel, i.e., the servant's*.

<sup>4</sup> Or, with other points, *My friend*.

<sup>5</sup> This couplet some, following Duhm, propose to remove as superfluous, taking the first line as a gloss, and transferring the second to after the line about Jerusalem in ver. 26.

<sup>6</sup> So LXX.

<sup>7</sup> Some read *terrify*, others *trample*.

<sup>8</sup> This line is removed by Duhm and others to before *I gird thee*, ver. 5.

3. *And I will give thee the treasures of darkness,  
And the hoards of secret places,  
That thou mayest know I am Yahweh,  
Who call thee by name, Israel's God.*
4. *For the sake of My servant Jacob,  
And Israel My chosen,  
By thy name have I called thee,  
And by thy title, though thou knewest Me not.*
5. *I am Yahweh, and none is there else,  
Besides Me no God.*

- Thee do I gird, though thou knewest Me not,*
6. *That men may know from the rise of the sun  
And from its setting that none is but I ;  
Yahweh am I, and none is there else—*
  7. *Former of light and creator<sup>1</sup> of darkness,  
Maker of weal and creator of evil,  
I Yahweh am God,<sup>2</sup> making them all.*
  8. *Shower, O heavens, from above,  
And skies distil righteousness !  
Let the earth open . . .<sup>3</sup>  
And bring forth salvation,  
And make victory<sup>4</sup> spring up together—  
I Yahweh create it.*

To the designation of Cyrus as the Messiah, great objections arose from Israel. We can understand them. People, who have fallen from a glorious past, cling passionately to its precedents. All the ancient promises of a deliverer for Israel represented him as

<sup>1</sup> Some omit *creator*.

<sup>2</sup> So LXX.

<sup>3</sup> A word seems to have dropped out. Following Delitzsch, some insert *her womb*.

<sup>4</sup> Lit. *righteousness* : see above, p. 120, n. 2.



springing from the house of David. The deliverance, too, was to have come by miracle, or by the impression of the people's own holiness upon their oppressors. The LORD Himself was to have made bare His arm and Israel to go forth in the pride of His favour, as in the days of Egypt and the Red Sea. But this deliverer, who was now announced, was alien to the commonwealth of Israel; and not by some miracle was the people's exodus promised, but as the effect of his imperial word—an incident in his policy! The precedents and the pride of Israel called out upon such a scheme of salvation, and the murmurs of the people rose against the word of God.

Sternly replies the Almighty :

- xliv. 9. *Ho, who quarrels with his Moulder !—  
A potsherd midst potsherds of the ground !  
Shall clay ask its Moulder, What doest thou ?  
Or his work, No hands hast thou.*<sup>1</sup>
10. *Ho, who says to a father, What begettest thou ?<sup>2</sup>  
Or to a woman, What art thou bearing ?*
11. *Thus Yahweh hath spoken,  
The Holy of Israel, his Moulder :  
Would ye question Me of things to come [or My  
sons],  
On the work of My hands give Me orders ?<sup>3</sup>*
12. *'Tis I who have made the earth,  
And created man upon it.  
I—My hands—have stretched the heavens,  
And the whole of their host have I ordered.*

<sup>1</sup> So, transposing the two possessive suffixes of the Heb. text (which runs *his work . . . has he*) partly after LXX, which reads *thou hast*.

<sup>2</sup> Some omit this couplet, feeling that the change of the figure, from *pot-making* to *begetting*, interrupts the connection between vv. 9 and 11.

<sup>3</sup> So Cheyne, by the addition of one letter, turns the imperative of the text to a question.

13. *'Tis I who have roused him in righteousness,  
And all his ways I will level.  
He shall rebuild My city,  
And set Mine exiles free.  
Neither for price nor reward—  
Yahweh of Hosts hath spoken.*<sup>1</sup>

There follow some lines, the first five of xlv. 14, for the text of which are alternatives, both of these, however, still implying the victorious progress of Cyrus. As they stand the lines promise that *the produce of Egypt and the traffic of Ethiopia*, with the tall Sabeans as slaves (? or carriers) *shall pass over to Israel—to thee*. But for *to thee* Duhm proposes to read *to him* and *after him* for *after thee*. And Cheyne, regarding Israel's enrichment by the Gentiles as a later dream and alien to the spirit of our prophet, reads *exiles of Egypt and captives of Ethiopia*, and omits *shall be thine and come after thee in chains*. My translation keeps to the Hebrew text. In either case the effect in the rest of verse 14 and verse 15 is the same. In face of Cyrus' progress the Gentiles acknowledge the power of Israel's God, who alone is the Deity, *hiding Himself in Israel*, but now revealed as the Saviour. Idols and their makers are reduced to confusion; Israel alone is not confounded, but saved with an everlasting salvation (16, 17).

14. *Thus sayeth Yahweh of Hosts :  
The produce of Egypt and the traffic of Kush,  
And Sabeans, men of a stature,  
To thee shall they pass and be thine,*

<sup>1</sup> This couplet also is omitted by Duhm and others; but with Skinner I fail to see the inconsistency they feel in it with what has gone before.

*Behind thee in chains shall they walk (?)*<sup>1</sup>  
*And*<sup>2</sup> *to thee shall they bow, and entreat :*  
*' Only in thee is God—and not elsewhere,*  
*No godhead at all.*

- xlv. 15. *Truly with thee*<sup>3</sup> *God hideth Himself,*  
*Israel's God is a Saviour,'*  
 16. *Ashamed, yea confounded shall be*  
*All who shall rise up against Him,*<sup>4</sup>  
*Gone in confusion are the carvers of idols.*  
 17. *Israel in Yahweh is saved—*  
*Everlasting salvation !*  
*Not ashamed shall ye be nor confounded*  
*Eternity through.*

The rest of the chapter (vv. 18–25) sweeps on with the same powerful wings, still stimulated, no doubt, by the spectacle of Cyrus and his invincible progress, but rising beyond all mention of him, to renewed contemplation of the God, Who, Creator of all things in heaven and on earth, had also predicted and called him, Who has made nothing in vain, and speaks nothing but truth and words that are straightforward; with another appeal to the Gentiles, on the proof of His predicting power, to look to Him and be saved and acknowledge His truthfulness; and with another assurance to Israel of their vindication.

18. *For thus hath Yahweh spoken :*  
*Creator of Heaven—He is the God !*  
*Former of Earth and her Maker,*  
*He was her Founder.*

<sup>1</sup> Cheyne, Marti, and Box, omit.

<sup>2</sup> With some codices of the LXX I omit the repetition in the text, *to thee shall they pass.*

<sup>3</sup> Reading יהוה for יהוה.

<sup>4</sup> So LXX. Heb. has *all of them together.*

*No chaos did He create her,  
To be dwelt in He formed her.  
Yahweh am I, else there is none !<sup>1</sup>*

19. *Never in secret I spake,  
In a place of the land of darkness,  
Nor said to the seed of Jacob,  
Seek Me in chaos !  
I am Yahweh who speak the truth,<sup>2</sup>  
Declaring things straightforward.*

20. *Gather, and come, draw together,  
O escaped of the nations !  
They know not, they who parade  
The wood of their image,  
And keep praying on to a god  
Unable to save !<sup>3</sup>*

21. *Declare and bring forward . . .<sup>4</sup>  
Yea, let them counsel together !  
Who hath announced this of old,  
From then did declare it ?  
Was it not Yahweh, I,  
And no other god but Myself ?  
A faithful God and Saviour,  
None was besides Me !*

22. *Turn ye to Me and be saved,  
All ends of the Earth !  
For I am God, and none else.*

<sup>1</sup> Duhm thinks that to complete a couplet the last line of ver. 21 should here be added.

<sup>2</sup> Literally *righteousness* : see p. 123, n. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Duhm, followed by Marti, thinks that *a casting* has dropped out from the previous line ; and they bring *a god* on to this one.

<sup>4</sup> A word may here have been dropped : *proofs or arguments*.

- xlv. 23. *By Myself have I sworn.  
 Forth from My Mouth goes truth,  
 Word that shall not return :  
 That to Me every knee may bend,  
 Every tongue confess to God :<sup>1</sup>*  
 24. *In Yahweh alone, shall they say,<sup>2</sup>  
 Are vindications and strength.  
 Even to Him shall they<sup>3</sup> come and be shamed,  
 All that were heated against Him.*  
 25. *But in Yahweh be righted,<sup>4</sup> and triumph  
 All Israel's seed.*

To the absolute statements in xlv. 24–xlv concerning Cyrus, the only further allusions to him by our prophet, in chaps. xlvi and xlviii, add but little.

- xlvi. 11. *Calling from the Sunrise a Bird-of-prey,  
 From a land afar the man of My counsel,  
 Yea I have spoken, yea bring it to pass,  
 I have formed, yea I will do it.*

*Bird-of-prey* here has been thought to have reference to the eagle, which was the standard of Cyrus. But the reference is to Cyrus himself. What God sees in this man to fulfil His purpose is swift resistless force. Not his character but his swoop serves the end of the Almighty.

- xlviii. 14. *Come ye together all and hearken :  
 Who among you<sup>5</sup> announced these things ?*

<sup>1</sup> So some codices of LXX.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *to me he hath said*, LXX *saying*.

<sup>3</sup> So many MSS.

<sup>4</sup> Eng. versions *justified*. Skinner rightly, '*be righteous, i.e., enjoy righteousness.*'

<sup>5</sup> So many MSS.

*Yahweh hath loved him, he will do His pleasure,  
On Babel and on the Chaldeans.*

15. *I, I have spoken and called him,  
Have brought him and prosper his way.*

This verb, *to cause to prosper*, is often used by our prophet, but nowhere more appropriately to its original meaning than here, where it is applied to *a way*. The word signifies to *cut through*, then to *ford* a river—there is no word for *bridge* in Hebrew—then to *go on well* or *prosper*, or in the factitive sense, to *pioneer*.<sup>1</sup>

In all these passages, then, there is no word about character. Cyrus is neither chosen for his character nor said to be endowed with one. But that he is there, and that he does so much, is due simply to this, that God has chosen him. And what he is endowed with is force, swiftness, irresistibleness. He is not a character, but a tool ; and God gives no reason for using him but that he has the qualities of a tool.

We cannot help being struck by the contrast of all this, the Hebrew view of Cyrus, with the well-known Greek views of him. To the Greeks he is first and foremost a character. Xenophon, and Herodotus almost as much as Xenophon, are almost less concerned with what Cyrus did than with what he was. He is the King, the ideal ruler. It is his simplicity, his purity, his health, his wisdom, his generosity, his moral influence upon men, that attract the Greeks, and they conceive that he cannot be too brightly painted in his virtues, if so he may serve for an example to following generations. But bring Cyrus out of the light of the

<sup>1</sup> Compare with this Hebrew word צלח the Greek προκοπτειν, 'to cut' or 'beat a way through like pioneers;' then to 'forward a work,' 'advance' or 'prosper': Luke ii. 52, Galatians i. 14, 2 Timothy ii. 16.



eyes of this hero-worshipping people, which has so gilded his native virtues, into the shadow of the austere Hebrew faith, and the brilliance is quenched. He still moves forcibly, but his character is neutral. Scripture emphasises only his strength, his serviceableness, his success : *Whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him, and I will loosen the loins of kings ; to open doors before him, and gates shall not be shut. I will go before thee, and make the mountains plain. I will shiver doors of bronze and bars of iron will I sunder* (xlv. 1, 2). That Cyrus is doing a work in God's hand and for God's end, and therefore forcibly, and sure of success—that is the interest which Scripture takes in him.

The difference is characteristic of the two nations. The Greek views Cyrus as an example ; therefore cannot too abundantly multiply his morality. The Hebrew views him as a tool ; but with a tool you are not anxious about its moral character, you only desire to be convinced of its force and its fitness. The Greek extols the knowledge, the wisdom, the far foresight of the man ; the Hebrew only his serviceableness—for ends far higher than he knew or could foresee. The Greek mind is careful to unfold the noble humanity of the man,—a humanity universally and eternally noble. By the side of that imperishable picture of him, how meagre to Greek eyes would have seemed the occasion, for which the Hebrew claimed that Cyrus had been raised up—to let the petty Jewish tribe back to their own corner of the earth. Herodotus and Xenophon, had you told them that this was the chief commission of Cyrus from God, to restore the Jews to Palestine, would have laughed. 'Identify him, forsooth, with those provincial interests ! He was meant, we lift him up, for mankind !'

What judgement are we to pass on these two characteristic pictures of Cyrus? What lessons are we to draw from their contrast?

They do not contradict, but in many particulars corroborate, one another. Cyrus would not have been the efficient weapon in the Almighty's hand, which our prophet panegyrises, but for that thoughtfulness in preparation and swift readiness to seize the occasion, which Xenophon extols. And nothing is more striking to one familiar with our Scriptures, when reading the *Cyropædia*, than the frequency with which the writer insists on the success that followed the Persian. If to the Hebrew Cyrus was the called of God, upheld in righteousness, to the Greek he was equally conspicuous as the favourite of fortune. 'I have always,' Xenophon makes the dying king say, 'seemed to feel my strength increase with the advance of time, so that I have not found myself weaker in my old age than in my youth, nor do I know that I have attempted or desired anything in which I have not been successful.'<sup>1</sup> And this was said piously, for Xenophon's Cyrus was a devout servant of the gods.

The two views, then, are not hostile, nor are we compelled to choose between them. Still, they make a very suggestive contrast, if we put these two questions about them: Which is the more true to historical fact? Which is the more inspiring example?

Which is the more true to historical fact? Undoubtedly, the Hebrew. It has been of far more importance to the world that Cyrus freed the Jews than that he inspired the *Cyropædia*. That single enactment of his, perhaps only one of a hundred consequences of his occupation of Babylon, has had infinitely greater

<sup>1</sup> *Cyropædia*, Book VIII, ch. vii. 6.

results than his character, or than its magnificent exaggeration by Greek hero-worship. No one who has read the *Cyropædia*—out of his school-days—would desire to place it in any contrast, in which its peculiar charm would be shadowed, or its own modest and limited claims would not receive justice. The charm, the truth of the *Cyropædia*, are enduring ; but the significance they borrow from Cyrus—though they are due more, perhaps, to Xenophon's own pure soul than to Cyrus—is not to be compared for one instant to the significance of that single deed of his, into which the Bible absorbs the meaning of his whole career,—the liberation of the Jews. The *Cyropædia* has been the instruction and delight of many,—of as many in modern times, perhaps, as in ancient. But the liberation of the Jews meant the assurance of the world's religious education. Cyrus sent this people back to their land solely as a spiritual people. He did not allow them to set up again the house of David, but thanks to him the Temple was in time rebuilt. Israel entered upon their purely religious career, set in order their vast stores of spiritual experience, wrote their histories of grace and providence, developed their worship, handed down their law, and kept themselves holy unto the Lord. Till, in the fulness of the times, from this petty and exclusive tribe, and by the fire, which they kept burning on the altar that, through Cyrus, they had been enabled to raise again, there was kindled the glory of an universal religion. To change the figure, Christianity sprang from Judaism as the flower from the seed ; but it was due to Cyrus in the first place that the seed was replanted in the only soil, in which it could have fructified as it did. Of such an universal destiny for the Faith, Cyrus was not conscious, but the Jews themselves were. Our pro-

phet represents him, indeed, as acting for *Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel's My chosen*, but the chapter does not close without proclamation to *the ends of the earth to look unto Yahweh and be saved*, and the promise of a time *when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess to the God of Israel*.

Now put all these results, which the Jews, regardless of the character of Cyrus, saw flowing from his policy, as the servant of God on their behalf, side by side with the influence which the Greeks borrowed from Cyrus, and say whether Greek or Jew had the more true and historical conscience of this great power,—whether Greek or Jew had his hand on the pulse of the world's main artery. Surely we see that the main artery of human life runs down the Bible, that here we have a sense of the control of history, which is higher than even the highest hero-worship. Some may say, ' True, but what a very unequal contest, into which to thrust the *Cyropædia* ! ' Precisely ; it is from the inequality of the contrast that we learn the uniqueness of Israel's inspiration. Let us do all justice to the Greek and his appreciation of Cyrus. In that, he seems the perfection of humanity ; but with the Jew we rise to the Divine, touching the right hand of the providence of God.

There is a moral lesson for ourselves in these two views about Cyrus. The Greeks regard him as a hero, the Jews as an instrument. The Greeks are interested in him that he is so attractive a figure, so effective an example to rouse men and restrain them. But the Jews stand in wonder of his subjection to the will of God ; their Scriptures extol, not his virtues, but his predestination to certain Divine ends.

Let us say no word against hero-worship. We have need of all the heroes which the Greek, and every

other, literature can raise up for us. We need the communion of the saints. To make us humble in our pride, to make us hopeful in our despair, we need our big brothers, the heroes of humanity. We need them in history, we need them in fiction; we cannot do without them for shame, for courage, for fellowship, for truth. But let us remember that still more indispensable—for strength, as well as for peace, of mind—is the other temper. Neither self nor the world is conquered by admiration of men, but only by the fear and obligation of God. I speak now of applying this temper to ourselves. We shall live fruitful and consistent lives only in so far as we hear God saying to us, *I gird thee*, and give ourselves into His guidance.

God's anointing of Cyrus, the heathen, has yet another lesson, which religious people especially need to learn.

This passage about Cyrus lifts us to a very absolute and awful faith. *I am Yahweh, and none else: Former of light and Creator of darkness, Maker of welfare and Creator of evil; I Yahweh, Maker of all these things.* The objection at once rises: Is it possible to believe this? Are we to lay upon providence everything that happens? Surely we Westerns, with our native scepticism and strong conscience, cannot be expected to hold a faith so Oriental and fatalist as that.

But notice to whom the passage is addressed. To religious people, who professedly accept God's sovereignty, but wish to make an exception in the one case against which they have a prejudice—that a Gentile should be the deliverer of the holy people. Such narrow and imperfect believers are reminded that they must not substitute for faith in God their own ideas of how God ought to work; that they must not limit His operations to their own conception of His past revelations; that God does not always work even by His



own precedents ; and that many other forces than conventional and religious ones—even forces which seem to be only force, as Cyrus himself seemed—are also in God's hands, and may be used by Him as means of grace. Charge is made in our day, against what are called advanced theological schools, of scepticism and irreverence. But this passage reminds us that the most sceptical and irreverent are those old-fashioned believers, who, clinging to precedent and their own stereotyped notions of things, deny that God's hands are in a movement, because it is novel and not orthodox. *Ho ! he that quarrels with his Moulder ! shall clay say to its moulder, What makest thou ?* God did not cease *moulding* when He gave us the canon and our creeds, when He founded the Church and the Sacraments. His hand is still among the clay, and upon time, that great 'potter's wheel,' which still moves obedient to His impulse. All the large forward movements, the big things of to-day—commerce, science, criticism—however neutral, like Cyrus, their character may appear, are, like Cyrus, in the grasp of God. Therefore let us show reverence and courage before them. Do not let us scoff at their novelty or grow fearful because they show no orthodox, or even no religious, character. God reigns, and will use them for what has been the dearest purpose of His heart, the emancipation of true religion, the confirmation of the faithful, the victory of righteousness. When Cyrus rose and the prophet named him as Israel's deliverer, and the severely orthodox in Israel objected, did God attempt to soothe them by pointing out how admirable a character he was, and how near in religion to the Jews themselves ? God did no such thing, but spoke only of the military and political fitness of this great engine, by which He was to batter Babylon.



That Cyrus was a quick marcher, a far shooter, an inspirer of fear, a follower up of victory, one who swooped like a *bird-of-prey*, one whose weight of war burst through every obstruction,—this is what the astonished pedants are told about the Gentile, to whose Gentileness they had objected. No soft words to calm their bristling orthodoxy, but heavy facts,—an appeal to their common-sense, if they had any, that this was the most practical means for the practical end God had in view. For again we learn the old lesson the prophets are ever so anxious to teach us, *God is wise*. He is concerned, not to be orthodox or true to His own precedent, but to be practical, and effective for salvation.

And so in our own day, though we may not see any religious character whatsoever about certain successful movements—say in science, for instance—which are sure to affect the future of the Church and of Faith, do not let us despair, neither deny that they, too, are in the counsels of God. Let us only be sure that they are permitted for some end—some practical end ; and watch, with meekness but with vigilance, to see what that end shall be. Perhaps the endowment of the Church with new weapons of truth ; perhaps her emancipation from associations which, however ancient, are enfeebling ; perhaps her opportunity to go forth upon new heights of vision, new fields of conquest.

## CHAPTER XI

### BEARING OR BORNE

#### ISAIAH XLVI

CHAPTER XLVI is a definite prophecy, complete in itself. It repeats many of the truths which we have found in previous chapters, and we have already seen what it says about Cyrus. But it also strikes out a new truth, very relevant then, when men made idols and worshipped the works of their hands, and relevant still, when so many, with equal stupidity, are more concerned about keeping up the forms of their religion than allowing God to sustain themselves.

The contrast, which previous chapters have been elaborating, is the contrast between the idols and the living God. On the one side we have had pictures of the busy idol-factories, cast into agitation by the advent of Cyrus, turning out with much toil and noise their unstable images. Foolish men, instead of letting God undertake for them, go to and try what their own hands and hammers can effect. Over against them, and their cunning and toil, the prophet sees the God of Israel rise alone, taking all responsibility of salvation to Himself—*I, I am He: look unto Me, all the ends of the earth, and be saved.* This contrast comes to a head in chap. xlv.

It is still the eve of the capture of Babylon, but the prophet imagines what will happen on the morrow.

He sees either the conqueror following the old fashion of triumph and carrying off the defeated gods of his foes as trophies to his own, or his subdued foes themselves packing up their idols at his approach. The gods of Babylon are brought down from their pedestals, and prostrate through the temples' doors—Bel or Baal, the title of Marduk, and Nebo regarded as Marduk's son :—

xlvi. 1. *Bel is bent to the knees, Nebo is cowering,  
Their images are on to beasts and cattle,  
The things you paraded are freight,  
A load for a jade !<sup>1</sup>*

So I render the received text, and I still think that as this stands it yields sense as well as a tolerably regular rhythm. The change from *their* (so also LXX) *idols* to *your burdens* or *the things you paraded* is abrupt, but not more so than other changes from the third to the second personal pronoun in this prophecy. The *things you paraded*, *hoisted*, or *carried aloft in procession* are now mere *freight*, *a load for a hack* or *jade*. The nouns and participles are mostly feminine, the Hebrew neuter, in order to heighten the dead-weight impression of the defeated idols. So many bales for beasts' backs, such are your gods, O Babylonians !

2. *They cower, they bow together,  
Powerless to rescue the load,  
Themselves are gone to captivity.*

<sup>1</sup> Duhm elides from the text *and cattle*, also *your* or *you* attached to *paraded*, and *a load* before *for a jade* or *wearied one*—all these elisions for the sake of rhythm or sense. As for Cheyne's drastic alterations of the text, all that can be said is that, if they were the original text, it is incredible that any scribal tradition of this, however careless, could have altered them into the present text.

In these lines the prophet speaks both of the gods themselves and of the dead idols which represent them. Both are done for: material images and any soul of deity that ever may have been within them are dead and carried away.

This never happened. Cyrus entered Babylon, not in spite of the native gods, but under their patronage, and was careful to do homage to them. Nabunahid, the king of Babylon, whom he supplanted, had vexed the priests of Bel or Marduk; and these priests had been among the many conspirators in favour of the Persian. So far, then, from banishing the idols, upon his entry into the city, Cyrus had himself proclaimed as 'the servant of Marduk,' restored to their own cities the idols that Nabunahid had brought to Babylon, and prayed,—'May all the gods whom I have brought into their own cities daily pray before Bel and Nebo, for the lengthening of my days. Let them speak the word for my good fortune, and unto Marduk, my lord, let them say: May Cyrus the king that feareth thee and Cambyses his son (have prosperity).'

<sup>1</sup>

Are we, then, because the idols were not taken into captivity, as our prophet pictures, to begin to believe in him less? We shall be guilty of that error, only when we disallow to a prophet of God what we do allow to any other writer, and praise him when he employs it to bring home a moral truth—the use of his imagination. What if these idols never were packed off by Cyrus, as our prophet here imagined? It still remains true that, standing where they did, or carried away, as they may have been later on, by conquerors, who were monotheists indeed, they were still mere ballast, so much dead-weight for weary beasts.

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 176, n. 2.

Now, over against this kind of religion, which may be reduced to so many pounds avoirdupois, the prophet sees in contrast the God of Israel. And it is but natural, when contrasted with the dead-weight of the idols, that God should reveal Himself as a living, a lifting God: a strong, unfailing God, who bears and who saves. In the following lines *loads*, *burdens*, *bear*, *carry* are intentionally and significantly the same as are used of the dead-weight idols and their bearers in ver. 1; with the addition in ver. 4 of another synonym, *I will bear*—a still heavier word than the others, expressive of grievous burdens, and, as we shall see, generally of burdens that are moral,<sup>1</sup> and so very fitly here of God's bearing of His people.

- xlvi. 3. *Hearken to Me, O House of Jacob,  
And all the remnant of Israel's House,  
Loads who have been from the birth,<sup>2</sup>  
And burdens on from the womb,*
4. *Even to old age I am He,  
Even to grey hairs will I bear.  
I, I have made<sup>3</sup> and will carry,  
I, I will bear and bring home.<sup>4</sup>*
5. *To whom will ye liken and match Me,  
Compare Me, as though we resembled?*

With the preceding lines the following are connected only by the use of the same verbs, *bear*, *carry*, or *lift*, and as I venture here to render the heaviest of them,

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah liii. 4, 11, of the Servant bearing the pains and sins of men.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *the belly*.

<sup>3</sup> So Heb. and LXX; but Klostermann proposes to read *have borne* or *taken up the load*: and others have followed him. Same verb of the Servant in liii. 4, *sabal*.

Literally, *recover*, *rescue*.

*heave on to* ; this is felt by some critics <sup>1</sup> an insufficient connection and, therefore, they take vv. 6-8 as an intrusion by a different hand. I am not sure ; our prophet delights to revert to the idols and their makers.

6. *Who pour out gold from a sack,  
And silver count off by the yard,  
Hire a smelter to make it a god,  
Bow low, yea, and worship it.*
7. *They lift it onto their shoulders, they heave it,  
Then set it down on its bottom,  
To stay and not stir from its place.  
Yea, if one cries to it, answer it shall not,  
Nor from his trouble deliver him.*
8. *Remember ye this and be men (?) <sup>2</sup>  
Ye rebels bring it to mind ! <sup>3</sup>*

The next verses resume connection with vv. 3-5, and repeat with variations the main themes of our prophet.

9. *Remember the former things of old,  
For I am God, and else there is none,  
God and nothing is like Me ! <sup>4</sup>*
10. *Telling from the first the issue,  
And from of old, things not yet done ;  
Who say, My counsel shall stand  
And all My purpose I do.*

<sup>1</sup> Duhm, Cheyne, Marti, Box.

<sup>2</sup> An unusual term. Targum renders *be firm*, LXX στενάζετε, Lagarde reads *be ashamed*, Duhm *be wise* (cf. Syriac), Klostermann, Cheyne, Box, Moffatt *own yourselves guilty*.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *heart*, but the Hebrews understood by *heart* the practical intellect.

<sup>4</sup> In the previous line Heb. has *El* in this *Elohim*. But this line may be an intrusion into, or gloss upon, the text. It is doubtful whether the LXX has it.



- xlvi. 11. *Calling a bird of prey from the sunrise,  
From a land far off the man I designed,<sup>1</sup>  
Yea what I spoke I bring it to pass,  
What I have fixed <sup>2</sup> that I accomplish.*
12. *Hearken to Me, ye that lose heart,<sup>3</sup>  
Ye that feel far from your righting ! <sup>4</sup>*
13. *My righting <sup>4</sup> I bring, 'tis not far,  
My salvation it shall not tarry ;  
I have granted salvation in Sion,  
To Israel My glory.*

Such is the prophecy. It starts a truth, which bursts free from local and temporal associations, and rushes in strength upon our own day and our own customs. The truth is this : it makes all the difference to a man how he conceives his religion—whether as something that he has to carry, or as something that will carry him. We have too many idolatries and idol manufactories among us to linger longer on those ancient ones. This cleavage is permanent in humanity—between the men that are trying to carry their religion, and the men that are allowing God to carry them.

Let us see how God does carry. God's carriage of man is no mystery. It may be explained without using one theological term ; the Bible gives us the best expression of it. But it may be explained without a word from the Bible. It is broad and varied as man's moral experience.

1. The first requisite for stable and buoyant life is

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *of My counsel* or *plan*.

<sup>2</sup> Lit. *formed*.

<sup>3</sup> So LXX. Heb. *stout* or *stiff of heart*.

<sup>4</sup> Lit. *righteousness*, but here as *righting* or *vindication*. See ch. xiv. If in the preceding line the reading *stiff of heart* is to be retained, then here it means that the pedants in Israel who objected to Cyrus as a Gentile have *ideas of righteousness* that are remote—but this is unlikely.

ground, and the faithfulness of law. What sends us about with erect bodies and quick, firm step is the sense that the surface of the earth is sure, that gravitation will not fail, that our eyes and the touch of our feet and our judgement of distance do not deceive us. Now, what the body needs for its world, the soul needs for hers. For her carriage and bearing in life the soul requires the assurance, that the moral laws of the universe are as conscience has interpreted them to her, and will continue to be as in experience she has found them. To this requisite of the soul—this indispensable condition of moral behaviour—God gives His assurance. *I have made*, He says, *and I will bear*.<sup>1</sup> These words were in answer to an instinct, that must have often sprung up in our hearts when we have been struggling for at least moral hope—the instinct which will be all that is sometimes left to a man's soul when unbelief lowers, and under its blackness a flood of temptations rushes in, and character and conduct feel impossible to his strength—the instinct that springs from the thought: 'Here I am, not responsible for being here, but so set by some One else, and the responsibility of the life, which is too great for me, is His.' Some such simple faith, which a man can hardly separate from his existence, has been the first rally and turning-point in many a life. In the moral drift and sweep he finds bottom there, and steadies on it; gets his face round, and gathers strength. And God's Word comes to him to tell him that his instinct is sure. *Yea, I have made, and I will bear*.<sup>1</sup>

2. The most terrible anguish of the heart, however, is that it carries something, which can shake a man off

<sup>1</sup> There is assonance in the words: 'anî 'asîthî, wa'anî 'essâ'—*I have made, and I will aid* (verse 4).

even that ground. The firmest rock is of no use to the paralytic, or to a man with a broken leg. And the most steadfast moral universe, and most righteous moral governor, is no comfort—but rather the reverse—to the man with a bad conscience, whether that conscience be due to the guilt, or to the habit, of sin. Conscience whispers, ‘God indeed made thee, but what if thou hast unmade thyself? God reigns; the laws of life are righteousness; creation is guided to peace. But thou art outlaw of this universe, fallen from God of thine own will. Thou must bear thine own guilt, endure thy voluntarily contracted habits. How canst thou believe that God, in this fair world, would bear thee up, so useless, soiled, and infected a thing?’ Yet here, according to His blessed Word, God does come down to bear up men. Because man’s sunkenness and helplessness are so apparent beneath no other burden or billows, God insists that just here He is most anxious, and just here it is His glory, to lift men and bear them upward. Some may wonder what guilt is or the conviction of sin, because they are selfishly or dishonestly tracing the bitterness and unrest of their lives to some other source than their own wicked wills; but the thing is man’s realest burden, and man’s realest burden is what God stoops lowest to bear. The grievous word for *bear*, ‘*sabal*,’ which we emphasised in the above passage, is elsewhere in the writings of the Exile used of the bearing of sins, or of the result of sins. *Our fathers have sinned, and are not, and we bear their iniquities*,<sup>1</sup> says one of the Lamentations. And in the fifty-third of Isaiah it is used twice of the Servant, *that He bare our sorrows, and that He bare their iniquities*.<sup>2</sup> Here its application to God—to such a God as we have

<sup>1</sup> Lam. v. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ver. 4, second clause, and 11.

seen bearing the passion of His people's woes—cannot fail to carry with it the associations of these passages. When it is said, God *bears*, and this grievous verb is used, we remember at once that He is a God, who does not only set His people's sins in the awful light of His countenance, but takes them upon His heart. Let us learn, then, that God has made this sin and guilt of ours His special care and anguish. We cannot feel it more than He does. It is enough: we may not be able to understand what the sacrifice of Christ meant to the Divine justice, but who can help comprehending from it that in some Divine way the Divine love has made our sin its own business and burden, so that might be done which we could not do, and that lifted which we could not bear?

3. But this gospel of God's love bearing our sins is of no use to a man unless it goes with another—that God bears him up for victory over temptation and for attainment in holiness. It is said to be a thoroughly Mohammedan fashion, that when a believer is tempted past the common he gives way, and slides into sin with the cry, God is merciful; meaning that the Almighty will not be too hard on His poor creature, who has held out so long. If this be Mohammedanism, there is a great deal of Mohammedanism in modern Christianity. It is a perfidious distortion of God's will. *For this is the will of God, even our sanctification*; and God never gives a man pardon but to set him free for effort, and to constrain him for duty. And here we come to what is the most essential part of God's bearing of man. God, as we have seen, bears us by giving us ground to walk on. He bears us by lifting those burdens from our hearts which make the firmest ground slippery and impossible to our feet. But He bears us best and longest by being the spirit and the soul and

the life of our life. Every metaphor here falls short of the reality. By inspired men the bearing of God has been likened to a father carrying his child, to an eagle taking her young upon her wings, to the shepherd with the lamb in his bosom. But no shepherd, nor mother-bird, nor human father ever bore as the Lord bears. For He bears from within, as the soul lifts and bears the body. The Lord and His own are one. *To me*, says he who knew it best, *To me to live is Christ*. It is, indeed, difficult to describe to others what this inward sustainment really is, seating itself at the centre of a man's life, and thence affecting vitally every organ of his nature. The strongest human illustration is not sufficient for it. If in the thick of the battle a leader is able to infuse himself into his followers, so is Christ. If one man's word has lifted thousands of defeated soldiers to an assault and to a victory, even so have Christ's lifted millions: lifted them above the habit and depression of sin, above the weakness of the flesh, above the fear of man, above danger and death and temptation more dangerous and fatal still. And yet it is not the sight of a visible leader, though the Gospels have made that sight imperishable; it is not the sound of Another's Voice, though that Voice shall peal to the end of time, which Christians only feel. It is something within themselves; another self—purer, happier, victorious. Not as a voice or example, futile enough to the dying, but as a new soul, is Christ in men; and whether their exhaustion needs creative forces, or their vices require conquering forces, He gives both, for He is the fountain of life.

4. God does not carry dead men. His carrying is not mechanical, but natural; not from below, but from within. You dare not be passive in God's carriage; for as in the natural, so in the moral world, whatever



dies is thrown aside by the upward pressure of life, to rot and perish. Christ showed this over and over again in His ministry. Those who make no effort—or, if effort be past, feel no pain—God will not stoop to bear. But all in whom there is still a lift and a spring after life: the quick conscience, the pain of their poverty, the hunger and thirst after righteousness, the sacredness of those in their charge, the obligation and honour of their daily duty, some desire for eternal life—these, however weak, He carries forward to perfection.

Again, in His bearing God bears, and does not overbear, using a man, not as a man uses a stick, but as a soul uses a body,—informing, inspiring, recreating his natural faculties. So many distrust religion, as if it were to be an overbearing of their originality, as if it were bound to destroy the individual's peculiar freshness and joy. But God is not by grace going to undo His work by nature. *I have made, and I will bear—will bear* what I have made. Religion intensifies the natural man.

And now, if that be God's bearing—the gift of the ground, and the lifting of the fallen, and the being a soul and an inspiration of every organ—how wrong those are who, instead of asking God to carry them, are more anxious about how He and His religion are to be sustained by their consistency or efforts!

To young men, who have not got a religion, and are brought face to face with the conventional religion of the day, the question often presents itself in this way: 'Is this a thing I can carry?' or 'How much of it can I afford to carry?' How much of the tradition of the elders can I take upon myself, and feel that it is not mere dead weight? That is an entirely false attitude. Here you are, weak, by no means master of yourself;



with a heart full of suggestions of evil ; a world before you, hardest where it is clearest, seeming most impossible where duty most loudly calls ; yet mainly dark and silent, needing from us patience oftener than effort, and trust as much as the exercise of our own cleverness ; with death at last ahead. Look at life whole, and the question you will ask will not be, Can I carry this faith ? but, Can this faith carry me ? Not, Can I afford to take up such and such opinions ? but, Can I afford to travel at all without such a God ? It is not a creed, but a living and a lifting God, Who awaits your decision.

At the opposite end of life, there is another class of men, who are really doing what young men too often suppose that they must do if they take up a religion,—carrying it, instead of allowing it to carry them ; men who are in danger of losing their faith in God, through over-anxiety about traditional doctrines concerning Him. A great deal is being said in our country just now of upholding the great articles of the faith. Certainly let us uphold them. But do not let us have in our churches that saddest of all sights, a mere ecclesiastical procession,—men flourishing doctrines, but themselves with their manhood remaining unseen. We know the pity of a show, seen in countries where they have not given over carrying images about. Idols and banners and texts will fill a street with their tawdry, tottering progress, and you will see nothing human below, but now and then jostling shoulders and a sweaty face. Even so are many of the loud parades of doctrines in our day by men, who, in the words of the received text, show themselves *stout of heart* by holding up their religion, but give us no signs in their character or conduct that their religion is holding up

them. Let us prize our faith, not by lifting it high, but by showing how high it can lift us.

Which is the more inspiring sight,—a banner carried by hands, that must sooner or later weary ; or the soldier's face mantling with the inexhaustible strength of the God who lives at his heart and bears him up ?

## CHAPTER XII

### BABYLON

#### ISAIAH XLVII

THROUGHOUT the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, One City remains, which, in fact or symbol, is execrated as the enemy of God and the stronghold of evil. In Genesis we see its foundation, as of the first city that wandering men established, and the quick ruin, which fell upon its impious builders. By the prophets we hear it cursed as the oppressor of God's people, the temptress of the nations, cruel and wanton. And in the Book of Revelation its character and curse are transferred to Rome, and the New Babylon stands over against the New Jerusalem.

The tradition and infection, which have made the name of Babylon as abhorred in Scripture as Satan's own, are represented as the tradition and infection of pride,—the pride, which, in the audacity of youth, proposes to attempt to be equal with God: *Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may touch heaven, and let us make us a name*; the pride, which, amid the success and wealth of later years, forgets there is a God at all: *Thou sayest in thine heart, I am, and there is none beside me*. Babylon is the Atheist or 'Auto-theist' of the Old Testament, as she is the Antichrist of the New.

That primitive Israel should have conceived a city

as the arch-enemy of God is due to historical causes, as intelligible, as those which led, in later days, to the reverse conception of a city as God's stronghold, the refuge of the weak and the wandering. God's earliest people were shepherds,—desert nomads, who were never tempted to rear permanent structures except as altars and shrines, but marched and rested, waked and slept, between God's bare earth and God's high heaven ; whose spirits were refined by the hunger and clear air of the desert, and who walked their wide world without jostling or stunting one another. With the dear habits of those early times, the truths of the Bible are therefore, even after Israel has settled in towns, spelt in the images of shepherd life. The Lord is the Shepherd, and men are the sheep of His pasture. He is a Rock and a Strong Tower, such as rise here and there in the desert's wildness for guidance or defence.<sup>1</sup> He is rivers of water in a dry place, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. And man's peace is to lie beside still waters, and his glory is, not to have built cities, but to have all these things put under his feet—sheep and oxen, the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea.

Over against that nomad life, the first cities rose, as we can imagine, high, terrible, and impious.<sup>2</sup> They were the product of an alien race,<sup>3</sup> a people with no true religion, as must have seemed to the Semites. But Babylon had a special curse. Babylon was not the earliest city,—Akkad and Erekh were famous before,—yet it is Babylon that the Book of Genesis represents as scattered by the judgement of God. What a contrast this picture in Genesis,—and let it be re-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Doughty, *Arabia Deserta*.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. i, 28 ; Amos, *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> Turanians who settled in Mesopotamia before the Semites.

membered that the only other cities to which that book leads us are Sodom and Gomorrah,—what a contrast this forms to the passages in which classic poets celebrate the beginnings of their great cities ! There the favourable omens, the patronage of gods, the prophecies of the glories of civil life ; the tracing of temple and forum ; visions of the city as the school of industry, the treasury of wealth, the home of freedom. Here but a few rapid notes of scorn and doom : man's miserable manufacture, without Divine impulse or omen ; his attempt to rise to heaven upon that alone, his motive to make a name for himself ; and the result—not, as in Greek legend, the foundation of a polity, the rise of commerce, the growth of a great language, by which through the lips of one man the whole city may be swayed together to high purposes, but scattering and confusion of speech. To Greek and later history, a city is a multitude of men within reach of one man's voice. Athens is Demosthenes ; Rome is Cicero persuading the Senate ; Florence is Savonarola putting by his word one conscience within a thousand hearts. But Babylon, from the beginning, gave its name to Babel, confusion of speech, incapacity for union and progress. And all this came, because to the writers of the Old Testament the builders of the city, the men who set the temper of its civilisation, did not begin with God, but in their pride deemed everything possible to unaided and unblessed human ambition, and had only the desire to make a name upon earth.

The sin and the curse never left the generations, which succeeded those impious builders. Pride and godlessness infested the city, and prepared it for doom. The early nomads had watched Babylon's fall from afar ; but when their descendants were carried as captives

within her in the time of her second glory,<sup>1</sup> they found that the besetting sin, which had once reared its head so fatally, infected the city to her very heart. We need not again go over the extent and glory of Nebuchadrezzar's architecture, or the greatness of the traffic, from the Levant to India, which his policy had concentrated upon his own wharves and markets.<sup>2</sup> But neither walls nor wealth make a city, and no observant man, with Hebrew faith and conscience, could have lived those fifty years in the centre of Babylon, especially after Nebuchadrezzar, without perceiving that her life was destitute of every principle which ensured union or promised progress. Babylon was but a medley of peoples, without common traditions or a public conscience, and incapable of acting together. Many of her inhabitants had been brought to her, like the Jews, against their will, and were ever turning from the battlements they were forced to build in their disgust, to scan the horizon for the advent of a deliverer. And many others, who moved in freedom through her, and shared her riches and her joys, were also foreigners, and bound to her only so long as she ministered to their pleasure or profit. Her king was an usurper, who had insulted her native gods; her priesthood was against him. And although his army, sheltered by the fortifications of Nebuchadrezzar, had repulsed Cyrus upon the Persian's first invasion from the north, conspiracies were now so rife among his oppressed and

<sup>1</sup> Babylon, as far as we can learn, first rose to power about the time of that Amraphel who fought in the Mesopotamian league against the neighbours and friends of Abraham. Amraphel was either the father of Hammurabi, or Hammurabi himself, who made Babylon the capital of Chaldea. But it was not till the fall of Assyria, about 625 B.C., and the re-building of Babylon by Nebuchadrezzar (604-561), that the city's second and greater glory began.

<sup>2</sup> See ch. iv.



insulted subjects, that, on Cyrus' second invasion, Babylon opened her impregnable gates and suffered herself to be taken without a blow. Nor, even if the city's religion had been better served by the king, could this in the long run have availed for her salvation. For, in spite of the science with which it was connected,—and 'the wisdom of the Chaldeans' was contemptible in neither its methods nor its results,—the popular religion was broken up into a multitude of wearisome and distracting details, whose absurd solemnities, especially when administered by a priesthood hostile to the executive, must have hampered every adventure of war, and rendered futile the opportunities of victory. In fact, Babylon, for all her glory, could not but be short-lived. There was no moral reason why she should endure. The masses, who contributed to her building, were slaves who hated her; the crowds, who fed her business, would stay with her only so long as she was profitable to themselves; her rulers and her priests had quarrelled; her religion was a burden, not an inspiration. Yet she sat proud, and felt herself secure.

It is these features which our prophet describes in chap. xlvii, a triumph and taunt song in the *Kinah* or elegiac metre, which is sustained throughout with remarkable regularity in lines of alternately three and two stresses, and running through five distinct strophes, as Professor Budde first clearly established.<sup>1</sup> Babylon is addressed as *virgin* probably because she has been long inviolate, and as *daughter of Khasdim* or the Chaldeans, though it is only her present usurping dynasty that is Chaldean. With vivid detail her im-

<sup>1</sup> *Z.A.T.W.* 1891, pp. 237 ff. The rhythm is that of ch. xiii; see vol. i, pp. 433 ff..

mediate debasement is proclaimed, in spite of her haughty self-confidence and 'autotheism'—*I am, besides me is none*—words which God alone can use. The wearisomeness and futility of her religious magic is exposed; she is taunted to make proof of it, proof which shall be vain. Nothing can prevent her breaking up, the innumerable contributors to her commercial grandeur shall flee, each his own way, none shall save her.

- xlvi. 1. *Down and sit in the dust,  
 Virgin daughter of Babel,  
 Throneless sit down on the earth  
 Daughter of Khasdim!  
 Never again shall they call thee  
 Tender and Dainty.*
2. *Take thou a quern and grind out meal,  
 Away with thy veil!  
 Strip off the skirt, bare thee the leg,  
 Wade through the streams.*
- 3b. *Vengeance I take nor let off,  
 Saith our Redeemer.<sup>1</sup>*
4. *Yahweh of Hosts is His Name,  
 The Holy of Israel.*
5. *Sit dumb and get into darkness,  
 Daughter of Khasdim,  
 For not again shall they call thee  
 Mistress of kingdoms.*

<sup>1</sup> In the text, ver. 3 opens with a couplet *Bare be thy nakedness, seen be thy shame*, which, since Duhm, most omit on account both of the deficiency of its metre and of the superfluity of its meaning. *Nor let off*, so since Ewald most moderns; reading 'ephra' for 'ephga' = *I will meet*. Changing the vowel-points of the latter, Gunning, Skinner, and Box render *be entreated*. *Saith*, reading with LXXA 'amar instead of 'adham = *man*, which is meaningless here; so now most translators.

xlvi. 6. *I have been wroth with My people,  
Dishonoured My heritage,  
Gave them to thy hand and thou  
Showedst them no mercy ;  
On the old thou hast heavily laid  
Grossly thy yoke.*

7. *And hast said, For ever I am,  
Mistress for aye.  
Thou hast set not these things to heart,  
Nor remembered their issue.<sup>1</sup>*

8. *So now hear this, O Voluptuous,  
Sitting self-confident.  
Who art saying in thine heart :  
I am and none else.*

*I shall not sit a widow,  
Nor know loss of children ;*

9. *So there shall reach thee these two,  
In a moment on one day,  
Childlessness, widowhood full <sup>a</sup>  
Upon thee shall come—  
Despite the wealth of thy spells,  
And the power of thy charms.*

10. *Though thou didst trust in thy wickedness  
Saying, None sees me !*

*Thy wisdom and knowledge it is  
That pervert thee.*

*Thou sayest in thine heart, I am,  
None else besides me.*

11. *Yet there shall come on thee evil  
Thou knowest not to charm,<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Some MSS. read *thine issue* or *end*.

<sup>2</sup> For *full* several codices of LXX read *suddenly*.

<sup>3</sup> So Targum, Rashi, and most moderns ; others read *its dawn* as, e.g., the Rev. Ver.

*And havoc shall fall upon thee  
 Thou canst not avert,  
 And sudden to thee shall come  
 Unawares ruin.*

12. *Stand thou I pray by thy spells,  
 By the wealth of thy charms !<sup>1</sup>  
 Perchance shalt be able to profit,  
 Perchance to strike terror ?*

13. *Thou art worn by the mass of thy counsels,  
 Pray let them stand !  
 Let save thee the mappers of heaven,  
 The gazers at stars,  
 They who make known at new moons  
 What shall befall thee.*

14. *Lo, they become like the stubble,  
 That fire has burned,  
 They cannot deliver themselves  
 From the hand of the flame.  
 No fuel are they for warmth,  
 Light to sit down by !<sup>2</sup>*

15. *Such now are to thee, with whom thou hast  
 toiled,<sup>3</sup>  
 Thy traffickers up from thy youth,  
 Each his own way have they fled,  
 None is thy saviour.*

We, who remember Isaiah's elegies on Egypt and Tyre,<sup>4</sup> shall be most struck here by the absence of

<sup>1</sup> The text adds *wherewith thou hast toiled from thy youth* : but, following Duhm, most now, and probably rightly, omit the line, which breaks the metre and may be borrowed from ver. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Duhm and others omit this couplet : Box, ' a prosaic addition which spoils the metre.' I do not feel this.

<sup>3</sup> Cheyne, Marti, and Box, regarding this line as metrically too long, transfer *with whom thou hast toiled* to the next, and there delete as a gloss *thy traffickers*. For *traffickers* Ewald and Duhm read *enchanters*.

<sup>4</sup> Vol. i, pp. 281 f., 295 ff.

all appreciation of greatness or of beauty about Babylon. Even while prophesying for Tyre as certain a judgement as is here predicted for Babylon, Isaiah, or some other prophet, spoke as if the ruin of so much enterprise were a desecration, and promised that the native strength of Tyre, humbled and purified, would rise again to become the handmaid of religion. But our prophet sees no saving virtue in Babylon, and gives her not the slightest promise of a future. There is pity through his scorn. The way in which he speaks of the futility of the mass of Babylonia's science ; of her ignorance, though served by hosts of counsellors ; in which, after recalling her countless partners in traffic, he describes their headlong flight, and closes with the words, *None is thy saviour*,—all this is pathetic. But upon none of his lines is there a touch of awe or admiration or regret for the fall of what is great. To him Babylon is wholly false, vain, destitute—as Tyre was not destitute—of native vigour. Therefore his scorn and condemnation are thorough ; and mocking laughter breaks from him as he pictures the dishonour of the virgin who was no virgin ; and as he interjects about the fire which shall destroy the mass of Babylon's magicians, astrologers, and haruspices : *No fuel this to warm oneself at, fire to sit down before*. But withal we are not allowed to forget, that it is one of the Tyrant's poor captives, who thus judges and scorns her.

*Our Redeemer ! Yahweh of Hosts is His Name,  
The Holy of Israel !*

Not the least interesting point of this taunt-song is the expression which it gives to the characteristic Hebrew sense of the wearisomeness and futility of that system of divination, which formed the mass of the Babylonian and many other Gentile religions. The

worship of Yahweh had very much in common with other Semitic cults. Its ritual, its temple-furniture, the division of its sacred year, its terminology, and even many of its titles for the Deity and His relations to men, may be matched in the worship of Phœnician, Syrian, and Babylonian gods, or in the ruder Arabian cults. But in one thing the law of Yahweh stands by itself,—its intolerance of augury and divination. It owed this distinction to the unique moral sense which inspired it. Augury and divination, such as the Chaldeans were most proficient in, exerted two evil influences. They hampered, sometimes paralysed, the industry and politics of a nation, and they more or less confounded the moral sense of a people. They were, therefore, utterly out of harmony with the practical sanity and morality of the Jewish law, which strenuously forbade them; while the prophets, who were practical men as well as preachers of righteousness, constantly exposed the fatigue they laid upon public life, and the way they distracted attention from the moral issues of conduct. Augury and divination wearied a people's intellect, stunted their enterprise, distorted their conscience. *Thy spells,—the mass of thy charms, with which thou hast wearied thyself. Thou art sick with the mass of thy counsels. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge! they have perverted thee.* When 'the Chaldean astrology' found its way to the New Babylon, Juvenal's strong conscience expressed the same sense of its wearisomeness and waste of time.<sup>1</sup>

Ashes and ruins, a servile and squalid life, a desolate site abandoned by commerce,—what the prophet predicted, that did imperial Babylon become. Not, indeed, at the hand of Cyrus, or of any single invader; but

<sup>1</sup> See especially *Satires III.* and *VI.*, and cf. Bagehot's *Physics and Politics*.



gradually by the rivalry of healthier peoples, by the inevitable working of the poison at her heart, Babylon, though in the most fertile and central part of God's earth, fell into decay. Do not let us, however, choke our interest in this prophecy, as so many students of prophecy do, in the ruins and dust, which were its primary fulfilment. The shell of Babylon, the gorgeous city which rose by Euphrates, has indeed sunk into heaps ; but the spirit of Babylon is not dead. Babylon never dies. To the conscience of Christ's seer, this *mother of harlots*, though dead and desert in the East, came to life again in the West. To the city of Rome, in his day, John transferred word by word the phrases of our prophet and of him who wrote the fifty-first chapter of the Book of Jeremiah. Rome was Babylon, in so far as Romans were filled with cruelty, arrogance, trust in riches, credulity in divination, and all that waste of mental and moral power which Juvenal exposed in her. *I sit a queen*, John heard Rome say in her heart, *and am no widow, and shall in no wise see mourning. Therefore in one day shall her plagues come, death and mourning and famine, and she shall be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God which judged her.*<sup>1</sup> But we are not to leave the matter even here : we are to use that freedom with John, which John uses with our prophet. We are to pass by the particular fulfilment of his words, in which he and his day were interested, because it can only have a historical and secondary interest to us in face of other Babylons of our own day, with which our consciences ought to be busy. Why do some continue to confine the reference of those chapters in the Book of Revelation to the city and church of Rome ? It is true that John meant

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xvii, xviii.

the Rome of his day, and true that many features of his Babylon may be traced upon the successor of the Roman Empire, the Roman Church. But what is that to us, with incarnations of the Babylonian spirit so much nearer ourselves. John's description, based upon our prophet's, suits better a commercial, than an ecclesiastical state,—though self-worship has been as rife in ecclesiasticism, Roman or Reformed, as among the votaries of Mammon. Let us ask what are the Babylonian tempers and touch our own consciences with them.

Forgetfulness of God, cruelty, vanity of knowledge (which so easily breeds credulity) and vanity of wealth,—but the parent of them all is idolatry of self. Isaiah told us about this in the Assyrian with his war ; here we see it in Babylon with her commerce and her science ; it was exposed even in the orthodox Jews,<sup>1</sup> for they put their prejudices before their God's revelation ; and it is perhaps as evident in the Christian Church as anywhere else. For selfishness follows a man like his shadow ; and religion, like the sun, the stronger it shines, only makes the shadow more apparent. But to worship your shadow is to turn your back on the sun ; selfishness is atheism, says our prophet. Man's self takes from God His word about Himself and says, *I am, and there is none besides me*. And he, who forgets God, is sure also to forget his brother ; self-worship leads to cruelty. A part of the charge against Babylon is her treatment of the Lord's own people. These were God's convicts, and she, for the time, God's minister of justice. But she unnecessarily and cruelly oppressed them. *On the aged thou hast heavily, grossly laid thy yoke*. God's people were given to her to be reformed,

<sup>1</sup> Ch. xlv, 9 ff.

but she sought to crush the life out of them. God's purpose was upon them, but she used them for her aggrandisement. She did not feel that she was responsible to God for her treatment even of the most guilty and contemptible of her subjects.

In all this Babylon acted in accordance with the prevailing spirit of antiquity ; and here we may safely affirm that our Christian civilisation has at least a superior conscience. The modern world does recognise, in some measure, its responsibility to God for the care even of its vilest and most forfeit lives. No Christian state at the present day would, for instance, allow its felons to be tortured or outraged in the interests either of science or of public amusement. We do not vivisection our murderers nor kill them off by gladiatorial combats. Our statutes do not get rid of worthless or forfeit lives by condemning them to be used up in public necessity. In our discharge of God's justice, we take care that the inevitable errors of our human fallibility may fall on mercy's side. It is true that in the practice of this we often fail, and are inconsistent. The point is that we have at least a conscience about the matter. We do not say, like Babylon, *I am, and there is none beside me* ; there is no law higher than my own will and desire ; I can, therefore, use whatever through its crime or its uselessness falls to my power, for the increase of my wealth or the satisfaction of my passions. We remember God, and that even the criminal and the useless are His. In wielding the power which His Law and Providence put into our hands towards some of His creatures, we remember that we are administering His justice, and not satisfying our own revenge, or feeding our desire for sensation, or experimenting for the sake of our pride. They are His convicts, not our spoil. In our treatment of them we are subject to His laws,

—one of which, that fences even His justice, is the law against cruelty; and another, for which His justice leaves room, is that to every man there be granted, with his due penalty, the opportunity of penitence and reform. There have been Positivists, who deny that these opinions and practices of modern civilisation are correct. Carrying out the essential atheism of their school—*I am man, and there is none else*: that in the discharge of justice and of charity men are responsible only to themselves—they dare to recommend that the victims of justice should be made the experiments of science, and that charity should be refused to the corrupt and the useless. Yet this is simply reversion to the Babylonian type, and the Babylonian type is doomed to decay. For history has writ no surer law upon itself than this—that cruelty is the infallible precursor of ruin.

But while speaking of the state, we should remember individual responsibilities as well. Success, even where it is the righteous success of character, is a subtle breeder of cruelty. The best of us need strongly to guard against censoriousness. If God does put the characters of sinful men and women into our keeping, let us remember that our right of judging them, of punishing them, even of talking about them, is strictly limited. Religious people easily forget this, and their cruel censoriousness or selfish gossip warns us that to be a member of the Church of Christ does not always mean that a man's citizenship is in heaven; he may well be a Babylonian and carry the freedom of that city upon his face. To 'be hard on those who are down' is Babylonian; to make material out of our neighbours' faults, for our pride, or love of gossip, or in prurience, is Babylonian. There is one practical rule to keep us safe. We may allow ourselves to speak

about our erring brothers to men, just as much as we pray for them to God. But if we pray much for a man, he will surely become too sacred to be made the amusement of society or the food of our curiosity or pride.

The last curse on Babylon reminds us of the fatal looseness of a society built only on the interests of trade ; of the loneliness and uselessness which await in the end all lives, that keep themselves alive simply by trafficking with men. If we feed life only on the news of the markets, the interest of traffic, the excitement of competition, the fever of speculation, the passions of cupidity and pride, we may feel healthy and powerful for a time. But such a life, which is merely being kept brisk by the sense of gaining something or overreaching some one, is the mere semblance of living ; and when the inevitable end comes, when they that have trafficked with us from our youth depart, then each particle of strength with which they fed us shall be withdrawn, and we shall fall into decay. There never was a truer picture of the quick ruin of a merely commercial community, or of the ultimate loneliness of a mercenary and selfish life, than the headlong rush of traders from Babylon, *each his own way*, from the city which never had other attractions, even for her own citizens, than those of gain or of pleasure.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE CALL TO GO FORTH

#### ISAIAH XLVIII

WHEN preparing the first edition of this volume in 1889, I assumed the literary unity of chap. xlviii, as did practically all expositors and critics of that date, notwithstanding the difficulty we felt in finding any connection between some of the verses. That assumption was not easy to surrender. But now I must own, that having studied the critical work on the chapter begun by Duhm in 1892, developed chiefly by Klostermann, Budde, Cheyne, and Marti, accepted by others, like Skinner, Whitehouse, and Box, I do not think it has been wholly in vain. Gradually, and with considerable agreement among its authors, this work on chap. xlviii has separated from undoubted lines of our prophet lines which are not consonant with his argument, style, or rhythm, but seem to be pious efforts to interline his teaching, in the circumstance and to the men of his own time, with exhortation and rebuke to Jews of a later period and a different character.

For besides the evident want of connection between some of the verses<sup>1</sup> the writer of the lines in question

<sup>1</sup> What, *e.g.*, is the connection between ver. 4, or vv. 8b-10, or the last couplet of 16 and the lines which respectively precede and follow them?



views the past of his people and condemns them in a different way from the writer of the bulk of xl-lv, and more akin to the perspective and spirit of Deuteronomy and Ezekiel.<sup>1</sup> The language, too, has echoes of Deuteronomy and Ezekiel, with a few words besides which, in their form or meaning, testify to a later period than that of our prophet when Hebrew had come under the influence of Aramaic.<sup>2</sup> And finally, if the lines which interrupt the connection and rhythm or show signs either doctrinal or linguistic of being from another hand than our prophet's, be withdrawn, then the lines left behind present a fairly consistent rhythm and an argument in agreement with that of the preceding chapters.

In the following translation I have enclosed in brackets the lines which, on the above grounds, are reasonably suspected as later additions, while leaving unbracketed those that may, without doubt, be assigned to our prophet. I take first verses 1-16.

xlvi. 1. *Hear ye this, O House of Jacob !*  
           *[Who are called by Israel's name,*  
           *And came out of Judah's womb,<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Duhm goes so far as to say of vv. 8b-10 that they 'fly in the face of the whole theology of Deutero-Isaiah,' and Marti that 'the view held by the deuteronomic school and Ezekiel that all the earlier period of Israel's history was one of relapse into idolatry,' and reappearing in xlvi. 8b, is not that of the Second Isaiah; though I think he is not right in saying that for the latter 'the worshippers of idols are the Gentiles' only; for xl. 18-20 are surely addressed to Israel.

<sup>2</sup> In 1 the name *Holy City*, which occurs indeed in ch. lii. 1. 'But there it is the ideal city of the future . . . here the phrase seems retrospective and presupposes an organised religious community dwelling within Jerusalem' (Whitehouse); otherwise the name is post-exilic. In 9 אַחֲשׁוּם. In 10 בָּחַר in the sense *to test*, so found only in Aramaic Hebrew, בָּחַן being the verb to test in classic Hebrew. In 19 מַעוֹת, not found elsewhere and explainable only by Aramaic (Marti).

<sup>3</sup> So first Secker by changing one letter of Heb. *waters*; LXX *Judah*; Targ. *seed*.

- Who swear by the Name of Yahweh  
And by Israel's God they celebrate,  
But not in truth nor in honesty ;<sup>1</sup>*
2. *For they call themselves by the Holy City,  
And stay them on Israel's God—  
Yahweh of Hosts is His Name.]*
3. *The former things I announced of old,<sup>2</sup>  
From My mouth they went, I made them heard,  
Sudden I wrought and they came.*
4. *[For I knew how stubborn thou art,  
A sinew of iron thy neck,  
And brass thy brow.]*
5. *And to thee I announced of old,<sup>2</sup>  
Before it was coming I made thee hear.  
Lest thou should'st say, mine idol hath wrought  
them,<sup>3</sup>  
Mine image, my casting ordained them.*
6. *Thou hast heard,—now look at it all (?)  
Thou,—wilt thou not bear witness ?<sup>4</sup>  
I tell thee new things from now,  
And hidden thou didst not know.*
7. *Now they are being created and not from of old,<sup>2</sup>  
Before to-day<sup>5</sup> thou hast not heard them,  
Lest thou should'st say, Lo these I knew !*
8. *Yea, thou hast neither heard nor known,  
Nor of old<sup>2</sup> was opened thine ear,  
[For I knew thee utterly treacherous,  
And Rebel-from-birth they called thee.*

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *ṣedāqah*, righteousness ; Duhm, *with right* : Cheyne, *rightly*.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *from then*.

<sup>3</sup> For *them* Cheyne translates *it*.

<sup>4</sup> The reading of this couplet is uncertain. I have rendered the first line literally as it stands ; but followed Duhm and Cheyne in altering (by change of one letter) the *declare* of the Heb. text to *bear witness*.

<sup>5</sup> Reading uncertain ; LXX in *former days*.

xlvi. 9. *For My Name's sake I bring Mine anger to order,*

*For My Praise I must spare (?) thee,  
That I cut thee not off.*

10. *Lo, I have smelted thee but not into <sup>1</sup> silver,  
In the furnace I have tried thee in vain.] <sup>2</sup>*

11. *For My own sake, My own, I do it.<sup>3</sup>  
And My glory I give not another.*

12. *Hearken to Me, O Jacob,  
And Israel whom I have called !  
I am He, I the First,  
I also the Last !*

13. *Yea, My Hand hath founded the earth,  
And My Right hath spread out the heavens,  
Whenever I call upon them,  
Ready they stand together.*

14. *Be gathered all you and hearken,  
Who among them <sup>4</sup> announced these ?  
He whom I love <sup>5</sup> shall perform My purpose,  
Babel upon and the seed of the Khasdim.<sup>6</sup>*

15. *I, I have spoken, yea called him,  
Have brought him and open his way.<sup>7</sup>*

16. *Draw near Me, hearken to this,  
From the first not in secret I spake,  
From the time that it was there was I.  
[And now my Lord Yahweh  
Hath sent me along with His Spirit] (?) <sup>8</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Unnecessary pother and variation of reading have been made about this. The Heb. preposition *in* or *into* before *silver* has, as in other instances of it, the force of *resulting in*. Cf. LXX *for sake of*.

<sup>2</sup> So Klostermann, followed by others, instead of *of affliction*.

<sup>3</sup> To this Heb. adds *for how should be profaned*, to which LXX adds *My Name*. Apparently this is a gloss.

<sup>4</sup> Many Heb. MSS. read *among you*; LXX *unto them*.

<sup>5</sup> After LXX. Heb. has *whom Yahweh loves*. But see Cheyne in *S.B.O.T.*

<sup>6</sup> So LXX; Heb. *and his arm on the Khasdim*.

<sup>7</sup> *He shall open*. See p. 185.

<sup>8</sup> Text uncertain. Kittel suggests reading *I, Yahweh, have sent him and his spirit*.

Taking only the unbracketed lines, for in them alone the hand of our prophet is clear, we find a summary of the argument he has pursued through the preceding chapters. Yahweh Himself is still the Speaker, and to His own people. He claims to have predicted to them from the first things which came to pass (1a, 3, 5), and He asks this generation of them to look at *all* that course of happenings which followed predictions and to *testify* to it (6a). But He adds: *from now I tell thee new things* (6b), actually *being created now and not from old* (7). What, then, are these new things? Cyrus was on his way, Babylon's fall imminent, and Israel's new destiny already taking shape—these are evidently the things in process of creation while God is speaking. But could it also be said of them that they were being told only *from now* (6)? There had been predictions of a deliverance from Babylon—one by Jeremiah<sup>1</sup> to name no others—and Babylon's imminent fall would be their fulfilment. But Cyrus himself, in so far as he sprang from a quarter of the world not indicated in former predictions, and in so far as he was a Gentile and yet the anointed, the Messiah of Yahweh—a combination unprovided for by any tradition in Israel—was *a new thing* and *told* only *from now*, so new that, as we have seen, the thing caused offence to hide-bound traditionalists in Israel.

We cannot overestimate the importance of this passage. It supplies the solution of the problem, how the presently-happening deliverance of Israel from Babylon could be both a thing foretold from long ago, and yet so new as to surprise those Israelites who were most devoted to the ancient prophecies. And at the same time such of us as are content to follow our

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xxv, 11, xxix, 10, undoubtedly authentic.

prophet's own evidence, and to place him in the Exile, have an answer put into our mouths, to render to those, who say that we destroy a proof of the Divinity of prophecy by denying to Isaiah or to any other prophet, so long before Cyrus was born, the mention of Cyrus by name. Let such objectors, who imagine that they are more careful of the honour of God and of the Divinity of Scripture, because they maintain that Cyrus was named two hundred years before he was born, look at verse 7. There God Himself says, that there are some things, which, for a very good reason, —*lest thou should'st say I knew them!*—He does not foretell before they come to pass. We believe, and have shown grounds for believing, that the selection of Cyrus, the mention of his name, and the furtherance of his arms against Babylon, were among those *new things*, which God says He purposely did not reveal till the day of their happening, and which, by their novel and unpredicted character, offended so many of the traditional and stupid party in Israel. Must there always be among God's people, to-day as in the day of our prophet, some who cannot conceive a thing to be Divine unless it has been predicted long before?

In vv. 3 and 5-8*a*, then, God claims to have changed His treatment of His people, in order to meet and to prevent the various faults of their character. Some things He told to them, long before, so that they might not attribute the occurrence of these to their idols. But other things He sprang upon them, without predictions, and in an altogether novel shape, so that they might not say of these things, in their familiarity with them, We knew of them ourselves.

Here a later hand has interpolated the lines in vv. 8*b*, 9, and 10, but in 11 we regain the original (save in the gloss, *how shall My Name be profaned*), and the Voice



of God gathers up the sum of what He has been saying in a great proclamation—one of the greatest in all Scripture—of His Omnipotence and Sovereignty: in Time, *I am the First and I the last*; in Space, *My hand founded the earth and spread the heavens*, ready servants who *stand to His bidding*; and in History, throughout all of which He has announced His will openly and without ambiguity, and is now calling one to fulfil it upon Babylon and the Chaldeans (11-16, save, perhaps, the last couplet).<sup>1</sup>

Cyrus, then, is already called and on his way, yet has not reached Babylon. Before the call to Israel to leave the city when he arrives and sets them free, with which call the chapter closes, some lines are given that are not only of a more general character than so particular an occasion demands, but are even irrelevant, if not contradictory, to it, the eve, as it is, of a great deliverance. For in the same way as the interpolations we have already found in the chapter the lines express a hopeless regret, if not rebuke, of Israel's past character, which had it been different would have secured the people from an extermination, implied as inevitable. The tone is pessimist, natural on other occasions in Israel's history, but certainly not on this one, and opposite to the prevailing tone of our prophet in chaps. xl-xlvi. Clearly these beautiful lines (vv. 17-19) have

<sup>1</sup> If, indeed, this be a couplet and not merely a prose interjection. Commentators have been much divided as to the speaker in ver. 16. Delitzsch saw in him Yahweh in the first three lines, and the Servant in the rest; Bredenkamp, Yahweh and the prophet in the same proportion; Orelli, the Servant all through; Hitzig, Knobel, Giesebrecht (*Beiträge zur Kritik Jesaia's*, 136), the prophet all through. The best solution seems to me to be Duhm's, which, with Whitehouse, I have adopted; to take the words *and now hath Yahweh sent me and His spirit* as due to the same hand which has interpolated other lines in the chapter. For other readings of the verse, see Cheyne, Budde, Marti, and Box.



been interpolated in his text ; but are none the less divine for that. Their style reminds us of Deuteronomy : it is not our prophet's.

- xlvi. 17. [*Thus hath spoken Yahweh thy Redeemer,  
The Holy of Israel :  
I am Yahweh thy God,  
Who teach thee to profit,  
Who set thee the way thou shouldst go.*
18. *O that thou hadst hearkened My command-  
ments,  
Then like a river were thy welfare,  
Thy prosperity like the waves of the sea.*
19. *And as the sand were thy seed,  
The issue of thy womb as its grains,<sup>1</sup>  
Never cut off or destroyed would be  
Its <sup>2</sup> name before Me.]*

Some one has well said that ' duty done is the soul's fireside ' ; but these lines discover a far broader figure for the obedience and faithfulness of a whole people—a fair river, a summer sea and sands !

Then comes in again the voice of our prophet in lines (vv. 20, 21) of another metre than the preceding : short ringing lines of two strong stresses, each like blasts from a trumpet. At last it is time to be up. Our salvation is nearer than when we believed. The Word has been sufficiently spoken. Day has dawned and the gates are opening.

20. *Go forth from Babel,  
Flee the Chaldeans !  
With a voice ringing out,  
Declare ye, make heard this !*

<sup>1</sup> LXX as the dust of the earth.

<sup>2</sup> LXX thy.

*Send ye it forth  
To the end of the earth !  
Say, Redeem'ed hath Yahweh  
His servant Jacob.*

21. *And thirst do they not  
When through deserts <sup>1</sup> He leadeth them,  
Water from the rock  
Trickling, He yields them,  
He cleaveth the rock.  
And waters gush out. <sup>2</sup>*

Whether the perfect verbs in this verse are to be rendered in the perfect, and so refer to God's conduct of early Israel in the desert of Sinai ; or whether they are to be understood as ' prophetic perfects,' referring to Israel's return through the deserts from Babylon, and describing it in the terms of that ancient guidance, is uncertain. Above, the latter alternative is adopted.<sup>3</sup>

We have reached the most distinct stage of which our prophecy gives trace. Not that a new start is made with the next passage. Chap. xlix may be regarded as the answer of the Servant himself to the appeal made to him in xlvi. 20 ; and chap. xlix does not introduce the Servant for the first time, but simply carries further the substance of the opening verses of chap. xlii. Nor is this urgent appeal to *Go forth from Babylon*, which has come to Israel, the only one, or the last, of its kind. It is renewed in chap. lii. 11-12. So that we cannot think that our prophet has even yet got the Fall of Babylon behind him. Nevertheless, the end of

<sup>1</sup> Singular, in LXX.

<sup>2</sup> LXX adds *His people shall drink.*

<sup>3</sup> Ver. 22, *there is no peace saith Yahweh to the wicked*, is irrelevant here, and in form a prose line out of metrical sympathy with the previous lines. It is obviously a mechanical intrusion borrowed from lvii. 21, in order, however unsuitably, to mark also here the close of a stage in the prophecy.

chap. xlviii is the end of the first and chief stage of the prophecy. The fundamental truths about God and salvation have been laid down ; the idols have been exposed ; Cyrus has been explained ; Babylon is practically done with. Neither Babylon, nor Cyrus, nor, except for a moment, the idols, are mentioned in the rest of the prophecy. The Deliverance of Israel is certain. And what now interests the prophet is first, how the Holy Nation will accomplish the destiny for which it has been set free, and next, how the Holy City shall be prepared for the Nation to inhabit. These are the two themes of chaps. xlix–lxvi. The latter of them, the Restoration of Jerusalem, has scarcely been touched by our prophet as yet. But he has already spoken much of the Nation's Destiny as the Servant of the Lord ; and now that we have exhausted the subject of the deliverance from Babylon, we will take up his prophecies on the Servant, both those which we have passed over in chaps. xl–xlviii, and those which still lie ahead of us.

Before we do this, however, let us devote a chapter to a study of our prophet's use of the word *righteousness*, for which this seems to be as convenient a place as any other.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF ISRAEL AND THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

#### ISAIAH XL-LXVI

IN the chapters which we have been studying we have found some difficulty with one of our prophet's keynotes—*right* or *righteousness*. In the chapters to come we shall find this difficulty increase, unless we take some trouble now to define how much the word denotes in Isa. xl-lxvi. There is no part of Scripture, in which the term *righteousness* bears so many meanings. To leave these vague, as readers usually do, or to fasten upon one and all the meaning of justice or the technical meaning of righteousness in Christian theology, is not only to obscure the historical reference and moral force of single passages,—it is to miss one of the main arguments of the prophecy. We have read enough to see that *righteousness* was the great question of the Exile. But what was brought into question was not only the righteousness of the people, but the righteousness of their God. In Isa. xl-lxvi righteousness is more often claimed as a Divine attribute, than enforced as a human duty or ideal.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is only by confining his review of the word to its applications to God, and overlooking the passages which attribute it to the people, that Krüger, *Essai sur la Théologie d'Isaïe xl-lxvi*, can affirm that the prophet holds throughout to a single idea of righteousness (p. 36). On this, as on many other points, it is Calvin's treatment which is most sympathetic to the variations of the original.

## I. RIGHTEOUSNESS

Ṣedhek, the Hebrew root for righteousness, had, like the Latin 'rectus,' in its earliest and now almost forgotten uses, a physical meaning. This may have been either *straightness*, or more probably *soundness*,—the state in which a thing is *all right*.<sup>1</sup> *Paths of righteousness*, in Psalm xxiii. 4, are not necessarily straight paths, but rather sure, genuine, safe paths.<sup>2</sup> Like all physical metaphors, like our own words 'straight' and 'right,' the applicability of the term to moral conduct was exceedingly elastic. It has been attempted to gather most of its meaning under the definition of *conformity to norm*;<sup>3</sup> and so many are the instances in which the word has a forensic force,<sup>4</sup> as of *vindication* or *justification*, that some have claimed this for its original, or, at least, its governing sense. But it is improbable that either of these definitions conveys the simplest or most general sense of the word. Even if *conformity* or *justification* were ever the prevailing sense of Ṣedhek, there are a number of instances in which its meaning far overflows the limits of such definitions. Every one can see how a word, which may generally be used to express an abstract idea, like

<sup>1</sup> In Arabic the cognate word is applied to a lance, but this may mean a sound or fit lance as well as a straight one. 'Originem Schult. de defect.

hodiernis § 214–224 ponit in *rigore, duritia*, coll. <sup>سـلـكـ</sup> صدقة lancea dura, al. æquabilis' (Gesenii *Thesaurus*, art. צדק).

<sup>2</sup> It is not certain whether righteousness is here used in a physical sense; and in all other cases in which the root is applied in the Old Testament to material objects, it is plainly employed in some reflection of its moral sense, *e.g.*, *just weights, just balance*, Lev. xix. 36.

<sup>3</sup> 'Der Zustand welcher der Norm entspricht.' Schultz, *Alt. Test. Theologie*, 4th ed., p. 540, n. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Robertson Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, p. 388, and Kautzsch's paper, which is there quoted; also Skinner, *Isaiah xl–lxvi*, pp. 238 ff.

*conformity*, or a formal relation towards a law or person, like *justification*, might come to be applied to the actual virtues, which realise that idea or lift a character into that relation. Thus righteousness might mean justice, or truth, or almsgiving, or religious obedience,—to each of which, in fact, the Hebrew word was at various times specially applied. Or righteousness might mean virtue in general, virtue apart from all consideration of law or duty whatsoever. In the prophet Amos, for instance, *righteousness* is applied to a goodness so natural and spontaneous that no one could think of it for a moment as conformity to 'norm or fulfilment of law.<sup>1</sup>

In short, it is impossible to give a definition of the Hebrew word, which our version renders as *righteousness*, less wide than our English word *right*. *Righteousness* is *right* in all its senses,—natural, legal, personal, religious. It is to be all right, to be right-hearted, to be consistent, to be thorough; but also to be in the right, to be justified, to be vindicated; and, in particular, it may mean to be humane (as with Amos), to be just (as with Isaiah), to be correct or true to fact (as sometimes with our own prophet), to fulfil the ordinances of religion, and especially the command about almsgiving (as with the later Jews).

Let us now keep in mind that *righteousness* could express a relation, or a vindication, or a general quality of character, or some particular virtue. For we shall find traces of all these meanings in our prophet's application of the term to Israel and to God.

<sup>1</sup> 'Die Begriffe צדקה and צדק . . . bedeuten nun wirklich bei Amos mehr als die juristische Gerechtigkeit. Indirect gehen die Forderungen des Amos über die bloß rechtliche Sphäre hinaus' (Duhm, *Theologie der Propheten*, p. 115).



## II. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF ISRAEL

One of the simplest forms of the use of *righteousness* in the Old Testament is when it is employed in the case of ordinary quarrels between two persons ; in which for one of them *to be righteous* means *to be right* or *in the right*.<sup>1</sup> Now to the Hebrew all life and religion was based upon covenants between two,—between man and man and between man and God. Righteousness meant fidelity to the terms of those covenants. The positive contents of the word in any single instance of its use would, therefore, depend on the faithfulness and delicacy of conscience by which those terms were interpreted. In early Israel this conscience was not so keen as it afterwards came to be, and accordingly Israel's sense of their righteousness towards God was, to begin with, a comparatively shallow one. When a Psalmist asseverates his righteousness and pleads it as the ground for God rewarding him, it is plain that he is able with sincerity to make a claim so repellent to a Christian's feeling, just because he has not anything like a Christian's conscience of what God demands from man. As Calvin says on Psalm xviii., ver. 20, 'David here represents God as the President of an athletic contest, who had chosen him as one of His champions, and David knows that so long as he keeps to the rules of the contest, so long will God defend him.' It is evident that in such an assertion righteousness cannot mean perfect innocence, but simply the good conscience of a man, who, with simple ideas of what is demanded from him, feels that on the whole 'he has' (slightly to paraphrase Calvin) 'played fair.'

Two things, almost simultaneously, shook Israel out of this primitive and naïve self-righteousness. History

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxxviii. 26 ; 1 Sam. xxiv. 17. Cf. 2 Sam. xv. 4.

went against them, and the prophets quickened their conscience.<sup>1</sup> The effect of the former of these two causes will be clear to us, if we recollect the judicial element in the Hebrew righteousness,—that it often meant not so much to be right, as to be vindicated or declared right. History, to Israel, was God's supreme tribunal. It was the faith of the people, expressed over and over again in the Old Testament, that the godly man is vindicated or justified by his prosperity: *the way of the ungodly shall perish*. And Israel felt themselves to be in the right, just as David, in Psalm xviii, felt himself, because God had accredited them with success and victory. But when the decision of history went against the nation, when they were threatened with expulsion from their land and with extinction as a people, that just meant that the Supreme Judge of men was giving His sentence against them. Israel had broken the terms of the Covenant. They had lost their right; they were no longer *righteous*. The keener conscience, developed by prophecy, swiftly explained this sentence of history. This declaration, that the people were unrighteous, was due, the prophet said, to the people's sins. Isaiah not only exclaimed, *Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire*; he added, in equal indictment, *How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of justice, righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers: thy princes are rebellious, they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come before them*. To Isaiah and the earlier prophets Israel was unrighteous because it was so immoral. With their strong social conscience, righteousness meant to these prophets the practice of civic virtues,—truth-telling, honesty between citizens, tenderness to the poor, inflexible justice in high places.

<sup>1</sup> The first chapter of Isaiah is a perfect summary of these two.

Here, then, we have two possible meanings for Israel's righteousness in the prophetic writings, allied and necessary to one another, yet logically distinct,—the one a becoming righteous through the exercise of virtue, the other a being shown to be righteous by the voice of history. In the one case righteousness is the practical result of the working of the Spirit of God ; in the other it is vindication, or justification, by the Providence of God. Isaiah and the earlier prophets, while the sentence of history was still not executed and might through the mercy of God be revoked, incline to employ righteousness predominantly in the former sense. But it will be understood how, after the Exile, it was the latter, which became the prevailing determination of the word. By that great disaster God finally uttered the clear sentence, of which previous history had been but the foreboding. Israel in exile was fully declared to be in the wrong—to be unrighteous. As a church, she lay under the ban ; as a nation, she was discredited before the nations of the world. And her one longing, hope, and effort during the weary years of Captivity was to have her right vindicated again, was to be restored to right relations to God and to the world, under the Covenant.

This is the predominant meaning of the term, as applied to Israel, in Isa. xl–lxvi. Israel's unrighteousness is her state of discredit and disgrace under the hands of God ; her righteousness, which she hopes for, is her restoral to her station and destiny as the elect people. To our Christian habit of thinking, it is very natural to read the frequent and splendid phrases, in which *righteousness* is attributed or promised to the people of God in this evangelical prophecy, as if righteousness were that inward assurance and justification from an evil conscience, which, as we are taught by

the New Testament, is provided for us through the death of Christ, and inwardly sealed to us by the Holy Ghost, irrespective of the course of our outward fortune. But if we read that meaning into *righteousness* in Isa. xl–lxvi, we shall simply not understand some of the grandest passages of the prophecy. We must keep in view, that while the prophet ceaselessly emphasises the pardon of God *spoken home to the heart* of the people, as the first step towards their restoral, he does not apply the term *righteousness* to this inward justification,<sup>1</sup> but to the outward vindication and accrediting of Israel by God before the whole world, in their redemption from Captivity, and their reinstatement as His people: *In Yahweh shall be righted and rejoice all Israel* (xlv. 25); *ye that are far from your righting* (xlvi. 12). This is very clear from the way in which *righteousness* is coupled with *salvation* by our prophet, as in xlv. 13: *My righteousness I bring, My salvation shall not tarry*, where I have rendered *righteousness* as *righting*, vindication; similarly, lxii. 1: *I will not rest till her righteousness go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth*. Or, again, from the way in which *righteousness* and *glory* are put in parallel (lxii. 2): *And the nations shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory*. Or again in the way that *righteousness* and *renown* are identified (lxi. 11): *The Lord Yahweh will cause righteousness and renown to spring forth before all the nations*. In each of these promises the idea of an external and manifest splendour is evident; not the inward peace of justification felt only by the conscience to which it has been granted, but the outward historical victory appreciable by the

<sup>1</sup> But the verb to *make righteous* or *justify* is used in a sense akin to the New Testament sense in liii. 11. See our chapter on that prophecy.

gross sense of the heathen. In some passages *righteousness* is virtually equivalent to *victory*, and with other translators I have so rendered it : *him on whose footsteps righteousness, i.e., success or victory waits* (xli. 2). Yet, of course, in the case of Israel the outward implies the inward,—this historical triumph is the crown of a religious process, the result of forgiveness and a long purification,—but while in the New Testament it is these which would be most readily called a people's righteousness, it is the former (what the New Testament would rather call *the crown of life*), which has appropriated the name in Isa. xl–lxvi. The same is manifest from another text (xlviii. 18) : *O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments ; then had thy welfare been as a river, and thy righteousness like the waves of the sea*. Here *righteousness* is not only not applied to inward morality, but set over against this as its external reward,—the health and *prosperity* which a good conscience produces. It is in the same external sense that the prophet talks of the *robe of righteousness* with its bridal splendour, and compares it to the appearance of *Spring* (lxi. 10–11).

For this kind of righteousness, this vindication by God before the world, Israel waited throughout the Exile. God addresses them as *they that pursue righteousness, that seek Yahweh* (li. 1). And it is a closely allied meaning, though perhaps with a more inward application, when the people are represented as praying God to give them *ordinances of righteousness* (lviii. 2),—that is, to prescribe such a ritual as will expiate their guilt and bring them into a right relation with Him. They sought in vain. The great lesson of the Exile was that not by works and performances,<sup>1</sup> but through

<sup>1</sup> Compare xliii. 24.



simply waiting upon the Lord, their righteousness should shine forth. Even this outward kind of justification was to be by faith.

The other meaning of righteousness, however,—the sense of social and civic morality, which was its usual sense with the earlier prophets,—is not altogether excluded from the use of the word in Isa. xl-lxvi. Here are some commands and reproaches which seem to imply it. *Who swear not in truth or righteousness—in honesty or faithfully* (xlviii. 1). *Keep judgement, and do righteousness*,—where, from what follows, righteousness evidently means observing the Sabbath and doing no evil (lvi. 1 ff). *And justice is fallen away backward, and righteousness standeth afar off, for truth is fallen in the street, and steadfastness cannot enter* (lix. 14). These must be terms for human virtues, for shortly afterwards it is said: *Yahweh was displeased because there was no justice*. Again, *They seek Me as a nation that did righteousness* (lviii. 2); *Hearken unto Me, ye that know righteousness, a people—My law is in their hearts* (li. 7); *Thou meetest him that worketh righteousness* (lxiv. 5); *No one sues in righteousness, and none goeth to law in truth* (lix. 4). In all these passages *righteousness* means something that man can know and do, his conscience and his duty, and is rightly to be distinguished from those others, in which *righteousness* is equivalent to the salvation, the glory, the peace, which only God's power can bring. If the passages, which employ *righteousness* in the sense of moral or religious observance, really date from the Exile, then the interesting fact is assured to us that the Jews enjoyed some degree of social independence and responsibility during their Captivity. But it is a very striking fact that these passages all belong to chapters, the exilic origin of which is questioned even by critics, who assign the



rest of Isa. xl-lxvi to the Exile. Yet, even if these passages have to be assigned to the Exile, how few they are in number! How they contrast with the frequency, with which, in the earlier part of this book,—in the orations addressed by Isaiah to his own times, when Israel was still an independent state,—*righteousness* is reiterated as the daily, practical duty of men, as justice, truthfulness, and charity between man and man! The extreme rarity of such inculcations in Isa. xl-lxvi warns us that we must not expect to find here the same practical and political interest, which formed so much of the charm and the force of Isa. i-xxxix. The nation has now no politics, almost no social morals. Israel are not citizens working out their own salvation in the market, the camp, and the senate; but captives waiting a deliverance in God's time, which no act of theirs can hasten. It is not in the street that the interest of Second Isaiah lies: it is on the horizon. Hence the vague feeling of a distant splendour, which, as the reader passes from chap. xxxix to chap. xl, replaces in his mind the stir of living in a busy crowd, the close and throbbing sense of the civic conscience, the voice of statesmen, the clash of the weapons of war. There is no opportunity for individuals to reveal themselves. It is a nation waiting, indistinguishable in shadow, whose outlines only we see. It is no longer the thrilling practical cry, which sends men into the arenas of social life with every sinew in them strung: *Learn to do well: seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.* It is rather the cry of one who still waits for his working day to dawn: *I will lift up mine eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help?* Righteousness is not the near and daily duty, it is the far-off peace and splendour of skies, that have scarce begun to redden to the day.

### III. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

But there was another Person, whose righteousness was in question during the Exile, and who Himself argues for it throughout our prophecy. Perhaps the most peculiar feature of the theology of Isa. xl-lxvi is its argument for *the righteousness of Yahweh*.

Some critics maintain that righteousness, when applied to Yahweh, bears always a technical reference to His covenant with Israel. This is scarcely correct. Yahweh's dealings with Israel were no doubt the chief of His dealings, and it is these which He mainly quotes to illustrate His righteousness; but we have already studied passages, which prove to us that Yahweh's righteousness was an absolute quality of His Godhead, shown to others besides Israel, and in loyalty to obligations different from the terms of His covenant with Israel. In chap. xli He calls upon the heathen to match their righteousness with His; righteousness was therefore a quality that might have been attributed to them as well as to Himself. Again, in xlv. 19,—*I, Yahweh, speak righteousness, I declare things that are straight*,—righteousness (here very near to the Arabic meaning for the root of *truth*) evidently bears a general sense, and not one of exclusive application to God's dealing with Israel. It is the same in the passage about Cyrus (xlv. 13): *I have raised him up in righteousness, I will make straight all his ways*. Though Cyrus was called in connection with God's purpose towards Israel, it is not that purpose which makes his calling righteous, but the fact that God means to carry him through, or, as the parallel verse says, *to make straight all his ways*. These instances are sufficient to prove that the righteousness, which God attributes to

His words, to His actions, and to Himself, is a general quality not confined to His dealings with Israel under the covenant,—though, of course, most clearly illustrated by these.

If now we inquire, what this absolute quality of Yahweh's Deity really means, we may conveniently begin with His application of it to His Word. In chap. xli. 26 He summons the other religions to exhibit predictions that are true to fact. *Who hath declared it on-ahead that we may know, or from aforetime that we may say, He is Šaddîk.*<sup>1</sup> Here šaddîk simply means *right, correct, true to fact*. It has much the same meaning in xliii. 9, where the verb is used of heathen predictors, *that they may be shown to be right, or correct* (English version, *justified*). But when, in chap. xlvi, the word is applied by Yahweh to His own speech, it has a meaning, of far richer contents, than mere correctness, and proves to us that after all the Hebrew šedhek was almost as versatile as the English 'right.' The following passage shows us that the righteousness of Yahweh's speech is its clearness, straightforwardness, and practical effectiveness: *Not in secret have I spoken, in a place of the land of darkness,—this has been supposed to refer to the remote or subterranean localities in which heathen oracles mysteriously entrenched themselves,—I have not said to the seed of Jacob, In Chaos seek Me. I am Yahweh, a Speaker of righteousness, a Publisher of straight things. Be gathered and come, draw near together, ye escaped from the nations. They know not that carry the log of their image, and pray to a god who does not save. Publish and bring near, yea, let them take counsel together. Who caused this to be*

<sup>1</sup> At first sight this is remarkably like the cognate Arabic root, which is continually used for truthful. But the Hebrew word never meant truthful in the moral sense of truth, and here is *right* or *correct*.

*heard of old ? long since hath published it ? Is it not I, Yahweh, and there is none else God beside Me ; a God righteous and a Saviour, there is none except Me. Turn unto Me and be saved, all ends of Earth,<sup>1</sup> for I am God, and there is none else. By Myself have I sworn, gone forth from My mouth hath righteousness : a word and it shall not turn ; for to Me shall bow every knee, shall swear every tongue. Truly in Yahweh, shall they say of Me, are righteousnesses and strength. To Him shall they come, and be shamed all that are incensed against Him. In Yahweh shall be righteous and renowned all the seed of Israel (xlv. 19-25).*

In this very suggestive passage *righteousness* means far more than simple correctness of prediction. Indeed, it is difficult to distinguish how much it means, so quickly do its varying echoes throng upon our ear, from the new associations in which it is spoken. A word such as *righteousness* is like the sensitive tones of the human voice. Spoken in a desert, the voice is itself and nothing more ; but utter it where the landscape is crowded with novel obstacles, and the original note is almost lost amid the echoes it startles. So with the *righteousness of Yahweh* ; among the new associations in which the prophet affirms it it starts novel repetitions of itself. Against the ambiguity of the oracles, it is echoed back as *clearness, straightforwardness, good faith* (ver. 19) ; against their opportunism and want of foresight, it is described as equivalent to the capacity for arranging things beforehand and predicting what must come to pass, therefore as *purposefulness* ; while against their futility, it is plainly *effectiveness and power to prevail* (ver. 23). It is the

<sup>1</sup> *Earth* again without article, though obviously referring to the world.

quality in God, which divides His Godhead with His power, something intellectual as well as moral, the possession of a reasonable purpose as well as fidelity towards it.

This intellectual sense of righteousness, as reasonableness or purposefulness, is clearly illustrated by the way in which the prophet appeals, in order to enforce it, to Yahweh's creation of the world. *Thus saith Yahweh, Creator of the heavens—He is the God—Former of the Earth and her Maker, He founded her ; not Chaos did He create her, to be dwelt in did He form her* (xlv. 18). The word *Chaos* here is the same as is used in opposition to *righteousness* in the following verse. The sentence plainly illustrates the truth, that whatever God does, He does not so as to issue in confusion, but with a reasonable purpose and for a practical end. We have here the repetition of that deep, strong note, which Isaiah himself so often sounded to the comfort of men in perplexity or despair, that God is at least reasonable, not working for nothing, nor beginning only to leave off, nor creating in order to destroy. The same God, says our prophet, who formed the earth in order to see it inhabited, must surely be consistent enough to carry to the end also His spiritual work among men. Our prophet's idea of God's righteousness, therefore, includes the idea of reasonableness ; implies rational as well as moral consistency, practical sense as well as good faith ; the conscience of a reasonable plan, and, perhaps also, the power to carry it through.

To know that this great and varied meaning belongs to *righteousness* gives us new insight into those passages, which find in it all the motive and efficiency of the Divine action : *It pleased Yahweh for His righteousness' sake to make His revelation great* (xlii. 21),



where, however, *righteousness* may mean fidelity to His covenant with Israel; *His righteousness, it upheld Him; and He put on righteousness as a breastplate* (lix. 16, 17).

With such a righteousness did their God deal with Israel. To her despair that He has forgotten her He recounts the historical events by which He has made her His own, and affirms that He will carry them on; and we feel the expression both of fidelity and of the consciousness of ability to fulfil, in the words, *I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness* (xli. 10). *Right hand*—there is more than the touch of fidelity in this; there is the grasp of power. Again, to the Israel who was conscious of being His Servant, God says, *I, Yahweh, have called thee in righteousness*; and, taken with the context, the word plainly means good faith and intention to sustain and carry to success. In xlv. 26, the *righteousnesses* of Yahweh are strikingly joined with *strength*, but there they may just be *vindications*.

It was easy to transfer the name *righteousness* from the character of God's action to its results, but always, of course, in the vindication of His purpose and word. Therefore, just as the salvation of Israel, which was the chief result of the Divine purpose, is called Israel's righteousness, or state of being *righted* or vindicated; so it is also called *Yahweh's righteousness*. Thus, in xlv. 13, *I bring near My righteousness*; that is *My righting* or *vindication* of Israel; and in li. 5, *My righteousness is near, My salvation is gone forth*; ver. 6, *My salvation shall be for ever, and My righteousness shall not be abolished*. It seems to be in the same sense, of finished and visible results, that the skies are called upon to *pour down righteousness*, and the earth to *open that they may be fruitful in salvation, and let her*



*cause righteousness to spring up together* (xlv. 8; cf. lxi. 11, *My Lord Yahweh will cause righteousness to spring forth*).

One passage is of great interest, because in it *righteousness* is used to play upon itself, in its two meanings of human duty and Divine effect—lvi. 1, *Observe judgement*—probably religious ordinances—and *do righteousness*; *for My salvation is near to come, and My righteousness to be revealed*.

To complete our study of *righteousness* it is necessary to touch still upon one point. In Isa. xl–lxvi both the masculine and feminine forms of the Hebrew word for righteousness are used, and it has been averred that they are used with a difference. This opinion is entirely dispelled by a collation of the passages. I give the particulars in a note, from which it will be seen that both forms are indifferently employed for each of the many shades of meaning which *righteousness* bears in our prophecies.<sup>1</sup>

That the masculine and feminine forms sometimes

<sup>1</sup> צדק, the masculine, is used sixteen times; צדקה, twenty-four. Both are used of Yahweh: xlii. 21 צדקו, and lix. 16 צדקתו. Both of His speech: masc. in xlv. 19, fem. in xlv. 23 and lxiii. 1. Perhaps the passage in which their identity is most plain is li. 5, 6, where they are both parallel to salvation: ver. 5, My righteousness (m.) is near; ver. 6, My righteousness (f.) shall not be abolished. Both are used of the people's duty: lix. 4, None sueth in righteousness (m.); xlviii. 1, But not in truth nor in righteousness (f.); lvi. 1, Keep justice and do righteousness (f.). And both are used of the people's saved and glorious condition: lviii. 8, Thy righteousness (m.) shall go before thee; lxii. 1, Until her righteousness (m.) go forth as brightness; xlviii. 18, Thy righteousness (f.) as the waves of the sea; liv. 17, Their righteousness (f.) which is of Me. Both are used with prepositions (cf. xlii. 6 with xlviii. 1), and both with possessive pronouns. In fact, there is no difference made between the two.

occur, with the same or with different meanings, in the same verse, or in the next verse to one another, proves that the selection of them respectively cannot be due to any difference in the authorship of our prophecy. So that we are reduced to saying that nothing accounts for their use, except, it might be, the exigencies of the metre. But who is able to prove this?



BOOK III

THE SERVANT OF THE LORD



### BOOK III

HAVING completed our survey of the fundamental truths of our prophecy, and studied the subject which forms its immediate and most urgent interest, the deliverance of Israel from Babylon, we are free to consider the great duty and destiny which lie before the delivered people—the Service of their God. The passages of our prophecy which describe this are scattered both among the chapters we have already studied and among those which lie before us. But, as was explained in the Introduction, all are easily detached from their surroundings, and the continuity and progress, of which their series, though so much interrupted, gives evidence, demand that they should be treated together. They therefore form the Third of the Books, into which this volume is divided.

The passages on the Servant of Yahweh, or, as the English reader is more accustomed to hear him called, the Servant of the Lord, are as follows: xli. 8 ff; xlii. 1-7, 18-25; xliii *passim*, especially 8-10; xliv. 1, 21; xlviii. 20; xlix. 1-9; l. 4-11; lii. 13-liii. The main passages are those in xli, xlii, xliii, xlix, l, and lii-liii. The others are incidental allusions to Israel as the Servant of the Lord, and do not develop the character of the Servant or the Service.

The question relevant to the structure of these prophecies—whether they were originally from the main author of Isa. xl-lxvi, or from any other single writer,—has already been presented in the Introduction to this volume, and the conclusion come to that



they are probably by our prophet himself. Some say they formed a poem by themselves before their incorporation with our prophecy ; but the evidence offered for this, is far from adequate. Some hold that one or more of them are insertions from other authors, to which our prophet consciously works up with ideas of his own about the Servant ; but neither for this is there any convincing evidence. All we can do is to remember that they occur in a dramatic work, which may, partly at least, account for the interruptions which separate them ; that the subject of which they treat is woven through and through other portions of Isa. xl-liii, and that even those of them which, like chap. xlix, look as if they could stand by themselves, are led up to by the verses before them. Finally, the series of them exhibits a continuity and furnishes a distinct development of their subject. See pp. 18-20 and 272 ff.

This development the following exposition seeks to trace. As the prophet starts from the idea of the Servant as being the whole, historical nation Israel, it is necessary to devote, first of all, a chapter to Israel's peculiar relation to God. This will be chap. xv, ' One God, One People.' In chap. xvi we shall trace the development of the idea through the whole series of the passages ; and in chap. xvii we shall give the New Testament interpretation and fulfilment of the Servant. Then will follow an exposition of the contents of the Service and of the ideal it presents to ourselves, *first*, as it is given in chap. xlii. 1-9, as the service of God and man, chap. xviii of this volume ; then as it is realised and owned by the Servant himself, as prophet and martyr, Isa. xlix-1, chap. xix of this volume ; and finally as it culminates in Isa. lii. 13-liii, chap. xx of this volume.

## CHAPTER XV

### ONE GOD, ONE PEOPLE

ISAIAH XLI. 8-20, XLII-XLIII

WE have been listening to the proclamation of a Monotheism so absolute, that, as we have seen, modern philosophy, surveying the history of religion, can find for it no rival among the faiths of the world. God has been exalted before us, in character so perfect, in dominion so universal, that neither the conscience nor the imagination of man can add to the general scope of the vision. Jesus and His Cross shall lead the world's heart farther into the secrets of God's love ; God's Spirit in science shall more richly instruct us in the secrets of His laws. But these shall thereby only increase the contents and illustrate the details of this revelation of our prophet. They shall in no way enlarge its sweep and outline, for it is already as lofty an idea of the unity and sovereignty of God, as the thoughts of man can follow.

Across this pure light of God, however, a phenomenon thrusts itself, which seems for the moment to affect the absoluteness of the vision and to detract from its sublimity. This is the prominence given before God to a single people, Israel. In these chapters the uniqueness of Israel is as much urged upon us as the

unity of God. Is He the One God in heaven? they are His only people on earth, *His elect, His own, His witnesses to the end of the earth*. His guidance of them is matched with His guidance of the stars, as if, like the stars shining against the night, their tribes alone moved to His hand through an otherwise dark and empty space. His revelation to humanity is given through their little language; the restoration of their petty capital, that hill fort in the barren land of Judah, is exhibited as the end of His processes, which sweep down through history and affect the surface of the inhabited world. And His very righteousness turns out to be in part and for the critical moment His faithfulness to His covenant with Israel.

Now to many in our day it has been a great offence to have 'the curved nose of the Jew' thus thrust between their eyes and the pure light of God. They ask, Can the Judge of all the earth have been thus partial to one people? Did God confine His revelation for mankind to the literature of one small, unpolished tribe? Even most uncritical souls have trouble to understand why *salvation is of the Jews*.

The chief point to know is that the election of Israel was an election, not to salvation, but to service. To understand this is to get rid of by far the greater part of the difficulty attaching to the subject. Israel was a means, not an end; in him God chose a minister, not a favourite. No prophet in Israel failed to say this; but our prophet makes it the burden of his message to the exiles. *Ye are My witnesses, My Servant whom I have chosen. Ye are My witnesses, and I am God* (xliii. 10, 12). *I will also give thee for a light to the nations, to be My salvation to the end of the earth* (xlix. 6). Numbers of other verses might be quoted to the same effect, that 'there is no God but God, and

Israel is His prophet.'<sup>1</sup> But if the election of Israel is thus an election to service, it is surely in harmony with God's usual method, whether in nature or history. So far from such a specialisation as Israel's being derogatory to the Divine unity, it is but part of that order and division of labour which the Divine unity demands as its consequence throughout the range of Being. The universe is diverse. *To every man his own work* is the proper corollary of *God over all*, and Israel's prerogative was but the specialisation of Israel's function for God in the world. In choosing Israel to be His mediator with mankind, God did but do for religion what in the exercise of the same practical discipline He did for philosophy, when He dowered Greece with her gifts of subtle thought and speech, or with Rome when He trained her people to become the legislators of mankind. And how else should work succeed but by specialisation,—the secret as it is of fidelity and expertness? Of fidelity—for the constraint of my duty surely lies in this, that it is due from me and no other; of expertness—for he drives best and deepest who drives along one line. In lighting a fire you begin with a kindled faggot; and in lighting a world it was in harmony with all His law, physical and moral, for God to begin with a particular portion of mankind.

The next question is, Why should this portion of mankind be a nation, and not a single prophet, or a school of philosophers, or a church universal? The answer is found in the condition of the ancient world. Amid its diversities of language and of racial feeling, a missionary prophet travelling like Paul from people to people is inconceivable; and almost as inconceivable is the kind of Church which Paul founded among various nations, in no other bonds than the conscious-

<sup>1</sup> Wellhausen.

ness of a common faith. Of all possible combinations of men the nation was the only form, which in the ancient world stood a chance of surviving in the struggle for existence. The nation furnished the necessary shelter and fellowship for personal religion ; it gave to the spiritual a habitation upon earth, enlisted in its behalf the force of heredity, and secured the continuity of its traditions. But the service of the nation to religion was not only conservative, it was missionary as well. It was only through a people that a God became visible and accredited to the world. Their history supplied the drama in which He played the hero's part. At a time when it was impossible to spread a religion by means of literature, or by the example of personal holiness, the achievements of a considerable nation, their progress and prestige, furnished a universally understood language, through which the God could publish to mankind His power and will ; and in choosing, therefore, a single nation to reveal Himself by, God was but employing the means best adapted for His purpose. The nation was the unit of religious progress in the ancient world. In the nation God chose as His witness, not only the most solid and permanent, but the most widely intelligible and impressive.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Revelation is never revolutionary. . . . As a rule, revelation accepts the fragments of truth and adopts the methods of religion already existing, uniting the former into a whole, and purifying the latter for its own purposes.' . . . For instance, 'in the East each people had its particular god. The god and the people were correlative ideas, that which gave the individuals of a nation unity and made them a people was the unity of its god ; as, on the other hand, that which gave a god prestige was the strength and victorious career of his people. The self-consciousness of the nation and its religion re-acted on one another, and rose and fell simultaneously. This conception was not repudiated, but adopted by revelation ; and, as occasion demanded, purified from its natural abuses.' —Professor A. B. Davidson, *Expositor*, Second Series, vol. viii, pp. 257-258.



The next question is, Why Israel should have been this singular and indispensable nation? When God selected Israel to serve His purpose, He did so, we are told, of His sovereign grace. But this strong thought, which forms the foundation of our prophet's assurance about his people, does not prevent him from dwelling also on Israel's natural capacity for religious service. This, too, was of God. Over and over again Israel hear their God say: *I have created thee, I have formed thee, I have prepared thee*. One passage describes the nation's equipment for the office of a prophet; another its discipline for the life of a saint; and every now and then our prophet shows how far back he feels this preparation to have begun, even when the nation, as he puts it, was *still in the womb*. How easily these well-worn phrases slip over our lips! Yet they are not mere formulas. Modern research has put a new meaning into them, and taught us that Israel's *creation, forming, election, polishing, carriage, and defence* were processes as real and measurable as any in history. For instance, when our prophet says that Israel's preparation began *from the womb*,—*I am thy moulder, saith Yahweh, from the womb*,—we are taken back to the pre-natal circumstance of the nation, and there find it as already tempered to a religious disposition and propensity. The Hebrews were of the Semitic stock. The *womb* from which Israel sprang was a race of wandering shepherds, upon the hungry deserts of Arabia, where man's home is the flitting tent, hunger is his discipline for many months of the year, his only arts are those of vision, speech, and war, and in the long irremediable starvation there is nothing to do but to be patient and dream. Born in these deserts, the youth of the Semitic race, like the probation of many of their prophets, was spent in a long



fast, which lent their spirit a wonderful ease of detachment from the world and of religious imagination, and tempered their will to long suffering—though it touched their blood, too, with a rancorous heat that breaks out in every Semitic literature.<sup>1</sup> They were trained also in the desert's august style of speech. *He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand hath He hid me.*<sup>2</sup> A 'natural prophecy,' as it has been called, is found in all branches of the Semitic stock. No wonder that from this race there came forth three universal religions—that Moses and the Prophets, John, Jesus Himself and Paul, and Mohammed were all of the seed of Shem.

This racial disposition the Hebrew carried with him into his calling as a nation. The ancestor, who gave the people the double name by which they are addressed throughout our prophecy, *Jacob-Israel*, inherited with all his defects two great marks of the religious temper. Jacob could dream and could wait. Remember him by the side of the brother, who so little thought of the future, that he was willing to sell its promise for a mess of pottage; who, though God was as near to him as to Jacob, never saw visions or wrestled with angels; who seemed to have no power of growth, but carrying the same character, unchanged through the discipline of life, finally transmitted it in stereotype to his posterity—remember Jacob by the side of such a brother, and you have part of the secret of the emergence of his descendants from the life of wandering cattle-breeders to be God's chief ministers of religion in the world.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Doughty, in his vivid description of the nomads of Central Arabia, the unsophisticated Semites on their native soil, furnishes ample material for accounting for the strange mixture of passion and resignation in these prophet-peoples of the world.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. xlix. 2.

Their habits, like their father's, might be bad, but they had the tough yet malleable constitution, which it was possible to mould to something better. Like their father, they were false, unchivalrous, selfish, 'with the herdsman's grossness in their blood,' and much of the rancour and cruelty of their ancestors, but with all this they had the two most potential of habits—they could dream and they could wait. In his love and hope for promised Rachel, which were not quenched or soured by the substitution, after seven years' service for her, of her ill-favoured sister, but began another seven years' effort for herself, Jacob was a type of his strange, tenacious people, who, when they were brought face to face with some Leah of a fulfilment of their fondest ideals, as they frequently were in their history, took up again with ardour the pursuit of their first unforgettable love. It is the wonder of history, how this people passed through the countless disappointments of the prophecies, to which they had given their hearts, with only a strengthening expectation of the arrival of the promised King and His kingdom. If other peoples have felt a gain in character from such miscarriages of belief, it has generally been at the expense of their faith. But Israel's experience did not take faith away or even impair its elasticity. We see their appreciation of God's promises growing only more spiritual with each postponement, and patience performing her perfect work upon their character; yet this never happens at the cost of the original buoyancy and ardour. The glory of it we ascribe, as is most due, to the power of the Word of God; but the people who could stand the strain of the discipline of such a word, its alternate glow and frost, must have been a people of extraordinary fibre and frame. When we think of how they wore for those two thousand years of postponed

promise, and how they wear still, after two thousand years more of disillusion and suffering, we cease to wonder why God chose this small tribe to be His instrument on earth. Where we see their bad habits, their Creator knew their sound constitution, and the constitution of Israel is a thing unique among mankind.

From the racial temper of the elect nation we pass to their history, on the singularity of which our prophet dwells with emphasis. Israel's political origin had no other reason than a call to God's service. Other peoples grew, as it were, from the soil ; they were the product of a fatherland, a climate, certain physical environments : root them out of these, and, as nations, they ceased to be. But Israel had not been nursed into nationality on the lap of nature. The captive children of Jacob had sprung into unity and independence as a nation through historical causes : at the clear call of God to them through one of their number and by a marvellous deliverance from their Egyptian oppressors with the articulate purpose of serving His Will in the world—His Will that so lay athwart the natural tendencies of the peoples. All down their history it is wonderful to see how the conscience of this service in periods of progress was the real national genius in Israel, and in times of decay or of political dissolution upheld the assurance of the nation's survival. Whenever a ruler like Ahaz forgot that Israel's imperishableness was bound up with their faithfulness to God's service, and sought to preserve his throne by alliances with the world-powers, then it was that Israel were most in danger of absorption into the world. And, conversely, when disaster came down, and there was no hope in the sky, it was upon the inward sense of their election to the service of God that the prophets rallied the people's faith and assured them of their

survival as a nation. They brought to Israel that sovereign message, which renders all who hear it immortal: 'God has a service for you to serve upon earth.' In the Exile especially, the wonderful survival of the nation, with the subservience of all history to that end, is made to turn on this,—that Israel has a unique purpose to serve. When Jeremiah and Ezekiel seek to assure the captives of their return to the land and of the restoration of the people, they commend so unlikely a promise by reminding them that the nation is the Servant of God. This name, applied by them for the first time to the nation as a whole, they bind up with the national existence. *Fear thou not, O My Servant Jacob, saith Yahweh; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity.*<sup>1</sup> These words plainly say, that Israel as a nation cannot die, for God has a use for them. The singularity of Israel's redemption from Babylon is due to the singularity of the service that God has for the nation to perform. Our prophet hears his God speak in the same strain: *Thou, Israel, My Servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, seed of Abraham My lover, of whom I took hold from the ends of the earth and from its corners have called thee and said unto thee, My Servant art thou, I have chosen and not cast thee away* (chap. xli. 8 ff). No one can miss the force of these words. They are the assurance of Israel's miraculous survival, not because he is God's favourite, but because he is God's servant, with a unique work in the world. Many other verses repeat the same truth.<sup>2</sup> They call *Israel the Servant*, and *Jacob the chosen*, of God, in order to persuade the people that they are not forgotten of

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xxx. 10, cf. xli. 27; also Ezek. xxxvii. 25: *And they shall dwell in the land that I have given My servant Jacob.* Cf. xxviii. 25.

<sup>2</sup> xliv. 1, 21; xlviii. 20, etc.

Him, and that their seed shall live and be blessed. Israel survives because he serves—*Servus servatur*.

Now for this service,—which had been the purpose of the nation's election at first, the mainstay of its unique preservation since, and the reason of all its singular pre-eminence before God,—Israel was equipped by two great experiences. These were Redemption and Revelation.

On the former redemptions of Israel from the power of other nations our prophet does not dwell much. You feel, that they are present to his mind, for he sometimes describes the coming redemption from Babylon in terms of them, as in xlv. 3, 4, 27 ; xlviii. 21. And once, in an appeal to the *Arm of Yahweh*, he calls out : *Awake like the days of old, ancient generations ! Art thou not it that hewed Rahab in pieces, that pierced the Dragon ? Art thou not it which dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep ; that made the depths of the sea a way of passage for the redeemed ?*<sup>1</sup> There is, too, that beautiful passage in chap. lxiii, which *makes mention of the lovingkindnesses of Yahweh, according to all that He hath bestowed upon us ;* which describes the *carriage of the people all the days of old, how He brought them through the sea, caused His glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, divided the water before them, led them through the deeps as a horse on a meadow, that they stumbled not*. But, on the whole, our prophet is too much engrossed with the immediate prospect of release from Babylon, to remember that past, of which it has been truly said, *He hath not dealt so with any people*. It is the new glory that is upon him. He counts the deliverance from Babylon as already come ; to his rapt eye it is its marvellous power and costliness, which already clothes the people

<sup>1</sup> Ch. li. 9, 10.



in their unique brilliance and honour. *Thus saith Yahweh, your Redeemer, the Holy of Israel: For your sake I am sending to Babylon, and I will bring them all down as fugitives, and the Chaldeans, in the ships of their exulting.*<sup>1</sup> But it is more than Babylon that is balanced against them. *I am Yahweh, thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour. I am giving as thy ransom, Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for thee, because thou art precious in mine eyes, and hast made thyself valuable* (lit., of weight); *and I have loved thee, therefore I give mankind for thee, and peoples for thy life.*<sup>2</sup> *Mankind for thee, and peoples for thy life,—all the world for this little people? It is intelligible only because this little people are to be for all the world. Ye are My witnesses that I am God. I will also give thee for a light to nations, to be My salvation to the end of the earth.*

But more than on the Redemption, which Israel experienced, our prophet dwells on the Revelation, which has equipped them for their destiny. In a passage, in chap. xlii, to which we shall return, the present stupid and unready character of the mass of the people is contrasted with the *instruction* which God has lavished upon them. *Thou hast seen many things, and wilt not observe; there is opening of the ears, but he heareth not. Yahweh was pleased for His righteousness' sake to magnify the Instruction and make it glorious,—but that—the result and the precipitate of it all—is a people robbed and spoiled.* The word *Instruction* or *Revelation* is that same technical term, which we have met with before, for Yahweh's special training and illumination of Israel. How special these were, how distinct from the highest doctrine and practice of any other nation in that world to which Israel belonged,

<sup>1</sup> Ch. xliii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> xliii. 3, 4.



is an historical fact that the results of recent research enable us to state in a few sentences.

Recent exploration in the East, and the progress of Semitic philology, have proved that the system of religion, which prevailed among the Hebrews, had a very great deal in common with the systems of the neighbouring and related heathen nations. This common element included not only such things as ritual and temple-furniture, and details of priestly organisation, but even the titles and many of the attributes of God, and especially the forms of the covenant in which He drew near to men. But the discovery of this common element has only thrown into more striking relief the presence at work in the Hebrew religion of an independent and original principle. In the Hebrew religion historians observe a principle of selection operating upon the common Semitic materials for worship,—ignoring some of them, giving prominence to others, and with others again changing the reference and application. Grossly immoral practices are forbidden; forbidden, too, are those superstitions, which, like augury and divination, draw men away from single-minded attention to the moral issues of life; and even religious customs are omitted, such as the employment of women in the sanctuary, which, however innocent in themselves, might lead men into temptations, not desirable in connection with the professional pursuit of religion.<sup>1</sup> In short, a stern and inexorable conscience was at work in the Hebrew religion, which was not at work in any of the religions most akin to it. In our previous volume we saw the same conscience inspiring the prophets. Prophecy was not confined to the Hebrews;

<sup>1</sup> Robertson Smith, Burnett Lectures in Aberdeen, 1889-90.

it was a general Semitic institution ; but no one doubts the absolutely distinct character of the prophecy, which was conscious of having the Spirit of the God of Israel. Its religious ideas were original, and in it we have, as all admit, a moral phenomenon unique in history. When we turn to ask the secret of this distinction, we find the answer in the character of the God, whom Israel served. The God explains the people ; Israel is the response to Yahweh. Each of the laws of the nation is enforced by the reason, *For I am holy*. Each of the prophets brings his message from a God, *exalted in righteousness*. In short, look where you will in the Old Testament,—come to it as a critic or as a worshipper,—you discover the revealed character of Israel's God to be the effective principle at work. It is this Divine character, which draws Israel from among the nations to their destiny, which selects and builds the law to be a wall around them, and which by each revelation of itself discovers to the people both the measure of their delinquency and the new ideals of their service to humanity. Like the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, we see it in front of Israel at every stage of their progress down the ages.

So that when Israel's God says that *He has magnified the Revelation and made it glorious*, He speaks of a magnitude of a real, historical kind, which can be tested by exact observation. Israel's *election* by Yahweh, their *formation*, their unique *preparation* for service, are not the mere boasts of an overweening patriotism, but sober names for historical processes as real and evident as any that history contains.

To sum up, then. If the sovereignty of Israel's God be absolute, so also is the uniqueness of Israel's calling and equipment for His Service. For, to begin with, Israel had the essential religious temper, enjoyed a

unique moral instruction and discipline, and by the side of this were conscious of a series of miraculous deliverances from servitude and from dissolution. So singular an experience and career were not, as we have seen, bestowed from any arbitrary motive, which exhausted itself upon Israel, but, in accordance with God's universal method of specialisation of function, were granted to fit the nation as an instrument for a practical end. The sovereign unity of God does not mean equality in His creation. The universe is diverse. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars ; and even so in the moral kingdom of Him, who is Lord of the Hosts of both earth and heaven, each nation has its own destiny and function. Israel's was religion ; Israel was God's special instrument in religion.

For confirmation of this we turn to the supreme witness. Jesus was born a Jew, He confined His ministry to Judæa, and He has told us why. By various passing allusions, as well as by deliberate statements, He revealed His sense of a great religious difference between Jew and Gentile. *Use not vain repetitions as the Gentiles do. . . . For after all these things do the nations of the world seek ; but your Father knoweth that you have need of these things.* He refused to work except upon Jewish hearts : *I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* And He charged His disciples, saying, *Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans ; but go rather to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.* And again He said to the woman of Samaria : *Ye worship ye know not what ; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.*

These sayings of our Lord have created as much question as the pre-eminence given in the Old Testa-

ment to a single people by a God, who is described as the one God of Heaven and earth. Was He narrower of heart than Paul, His servant, who was debtor to Greek and Barbarian? Or was He ignorant of the universal character of His mission till it was forced upon His sympathies by the importunity of such heathen as the Syrophenician woman? A little common sense dispels the perplexity, and leaves the problem, over which volumes have been written, no problem at all. Our Lord limited Himself to Israel, not because He was narrow, but because He was practical; not from ignorance, but from wisdom. He came from heaven to sow the seed of Divine truth; and where in all humanity should He find the soil so ready as within the long-chosen people? He knew of that discipline of the centuries. In the words of His own parable, the Son when He came to earth directed His attention not to a piece of desert, but to *the vineyard* which His Father's servants had so long cultivated, and where the soil was ready. Jesus came to Israel because He expected *faith in Israel*. That this practical end was the deliberate intention of His will, is proved by the fact that when He found faith elsewhere either in Syrian or Greek or Roman hearts, He did not hesitate to let His acknowledgment and His healing power go forth to them.

In short, we shall have no difficulty about these Divine methods with a single, elect people, if we only remember that to be Divine is to be practical. *Yet God also is wise*, said Isaiah to the Jews when they preferred their own clever policies to the guidance of their own God. And we need to be told the same, who murmur that to confine Himself to a single nation was not the ideal thing for the One God to do; or who imagine that it was left to one of our Lord's own

creatures to suggest to Him the policy of His mission upon earth. We are shortsighted : and the Almighty is past finding out. But this, at least, it is possible for us to see, that, in choosing one nation to be His agent among men, God chose the type of instrument best fitted at the time for the work for which He designed it, and that in choosing Israel to be that nation, He chose a people of temper and experience singularly suitable to His end.

Israel's election as a nation, therefore, was to Service. To be a nation and to be God's Servant was pretty much one and the same thing for Israel. Israel were to survive the Exile, because they were to serve the world. Let us carry this over to the study of our next chapter—The Servant of The Lord.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE SERVANT OF THE LORD

ISAIAH XLI. 8-20 ; XLII. 1-7, 18 ff. ; XLIII. 5-10 ; XLIX. 1-9 ;  
L. 4-10 ; LII. 13-LIII

WITH chap. xlii we reach a distinct stage in our prophecy. The preceding chapters have been occupied with the declaration of the great, basal truth, that the God of Israel is the One Sovereign God. This has been declared to two classes of hearers in succession—to God's own people, Israel, in chap. xl, and to the heathen in chap. xli. Having established His sovereignty, God now publishes His will, again addressing these two classes according to the purpose which He has for each. Has He vindicated Himself to Israel, the Almighty and the Righteous God, Who will give His people freedom and strength : He will now define to them the mission for which that strength and freedom are required. Has He proved to the Gentiles that He is the one true God : He will declare to them now what truth He has for them to learn. In short, to use modern terms, the apologetic of chaps. xl-xli is succeeded by the missionary programme of chap. xlii. And although, from the necessities of the case, we are frequently brought back, in the course of the prophecy, to its fundamental claims for the Godhead of Yahweh, we are nevertheless sensible that with the first verse of chap. xlii we are on a distinct advance. It is one of



those logical steps which, along with a certain chronological progress that we have already felt, assures us that our prophecy is in its present form a unity, with a distinct order and principle of development.

The Purpose of God is identified with a Minister or Servant, whom He commissions to carry it out in the world. This Servant is brought before us with all the urgency with which God has presented Himself, and next to the God of Israel he turns out to be the most important figure of the prophecy. Does the prophet insist that God is the only source and sufficiency of His people's salvation : it is with equal emphasis that He introduces the Servant as God's indispensable agent in the work. Cyrus is also acknowledged as an elect instrument. But neither in closeness to God, nor in effect upon the world, is Cyrus to be compared to the Servant. Cyrus is subservient and incidental : with the overthrow of Babylon, for which he was raised up, he will disappear from the stage of our prophecy. But God's purpose, which uses the gates opened by Cyrus, only to pass through them with the redeemed people to the regeneration of the whole world, is to be carried to this Divine consummation by the Servant : its universal and glorious progress is identified with his career. Cyrus flashes through these pages a well-polished sword : it is only his swift and brilliant usefulness that is allowed to catch our eye. But the Servant is a Character, to delineate whose immortal beauty and example the prophet devotes almost as much space as he does to his God. As he turns again and again to speak of God's omnipotence and faithfulness and agonising love for His own, so with almost equal frequency and fondness does he linger on every feature of the Servant's conduct and aspect : His gentleness, His patience, His courage, His purity, His

meekness ; His daily wakefulness to God's voice, the swiftness and brilliance of His speech for others, His silence under His own torments ; His resorts—among the bruised, the prisoners, the forwandered of Israel, the weary, and them that sit in darkness, the far-off heathen ; His warfare with the world, His face set like a flint ; His unworldly beauty, which men call ugliness ; His unnoticed presence in His own generation, yet the effect of His face upon kings ; His habit of woe, a man of sorrows and acquainted with sickness ; His sore stripes and bruises, His judicial murder, His felon's grave ; His exaltation and eternal glory—till we may reverently say that these pictures, by their vividness and charm, have drawn our eyes away from our prophet's visions of God, and have caused the chapters in which they occur to be oftener read among us, and learned by heart, than the chapters in which God Himself is lifted up and adored. The Lord and the Servant of the Lord—these are the two heroes of the drama.

Now we might naturally expect that so indispensable and fondly conceived a figure would also be defined past all ambiguity, whether as to His time or person or name. But that is not the case. About Scripture there are few more intricate questions than those on the Servant of the Lord. Is He a Person or Personification ? If the latter, is He a Personification of all Israel ? Or of a part of Israel ? Or of the ideal Israel ? Or of the Order of the Prophets ? Or if a Person—is he the prophet himself ? Or a martyr who has already lived and suffered, like Jeremiah ? Or One still to come, like the promised Messiah ? Each of these suggestions has not only been made about the Servant, but derives considerable support from one or another of our prophet's dissolving views of his person and

work. A final answer to them can be given only after a study of the relevant passages ; but as these are scattered over the prophecy, and our detailed exposition of them must necessarily be interrupted, it will be of advantage to take here a prospect of them all, and see to what they combine to develop this sublime character and mission. And when we have seen what the prophecies themselves teach concerning the Servant, we shall inquire how they were understood and fulfilled by the New Testament ; and that will show us how to expound and apply them to ourselves.

1. The Hebrew word for *Servant* means a person at the disposal of another—to carry out his will, do his work, represent his interests. It was thus applied to the representatives of a king or the worshippers of a god.<sup>1</sup> All Israelites were thus in a sense the *servants of Yahweh* ; though in the singular the title was reserved for persons of extraordinary character or usefulness.

But we have clearly seen that God set apart for His chief service upon earth, not an individual nor a group of individuals, but a whole nation in its national capacity. We have found Israel's political origin and preservation bound up with that service ; we have heard the whole nation plainly called, by Jeremiah and

<sup>1</sup> A king's courtiers, soldiers, or subjects are called *his servants*. In this sense Israel was often styled the *servants of Yahweh*, as in Deut. xxxii. 36 ; Neh. i. 10, where the phrase is parallel to *His people*. But *Yahweh's servants* is a phrase also parallel to His worshippers (Psalm cxxxiv. 1, etc.) ; to those who trust Him (Psalm xxxiv. 22) ; and to those who love His name (Psalm lxix. 36). The term is also applied in the plural to the prophets (Amos iii. 7) ; and in the singular, to eminent individuals—such as Abraham, Joshua, David, and Job ; also by Jeremiah to the alien Nebuchadrezzar, while engaged on his mission from God against Jerusalem, as by our prophet to Cyrus.

Ezekiel, the Servant of Yahweh.<sup>1</sup> Nothing could be more clear than this, that in the earlier years of the Exile the Servant of Yahweh was Israel as a whole, Israel as a nation.

It is also in this sense that our prophet first uses the title in a passage we have already quoted (xli. 8) ; *Thou Israel, My Servant, Jacob whom I have chosen seed of Abraham My lover, whom I took hold of from the ends of the earth and from its corners I called thee and said unto thee, My Servant art thou. I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.* Here the Servant is plainly the historical nation, descended from Abraham, and the subject of those national experiences which are traced in the previous chapter. It is the same in the following verses :—xliv. 1 ff. : *Yet now hear, O Jacob My servant, and Israel, whom I have chosen : thus saith Yahweh thy Maker, and thy Former from the womb, He will help thee. Fear not, My servant Jacob ; and Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. . . . I will pour My spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring.* xliv. 21 : *Remember these things, O Jacob ; and Israel, for My servant art thou : I have formed thee ; a servant for Myself art thou.* xlviii. 20 : *Go ye forth from Babylon ; say, Yahweh hath redeemed His servant Jacob.* In all these verses, which bind up the nation's restoration from exile with the fact that God called it to be His Servant, the title *Servant* is plainly equivalent to the national name *Israel* or *Jacob*. But *Israel* or *Jacob* is not a label for the mere national idea, or the bare political framework, without regard to the living individuals included in it. To the eye and heart of Him, *Who counts the number of the stars*, Israel means no mere outline, but all the individuals of the living generation

<sup>1</sup> See p. 261.

of the people—*thy seed*, that is, every born Israelite, however fallen or forwandered. This is made clear in a very beautiful passage in chap. xliii. (vv. 1-7): *Thus saith Yahweh, thy Creator, O Jacob; thy Former, O Israel. . . . Fear not, for I am with thee; from the sunrise I will bring thy seed, and from the sunset will I gather thee; . . . My sons from far, and My daughters from the end of the earth; every one who is called by My name, and whom for My glory I have created, formed, yea, I have made him.* To this Israel—Israel as a whole, yet no mere abstraction or outline of the nation, but the people in mass and bulk—every individual of whom is dear to Yahweh, and in some sense shares His calling and equipment—to this Israel the title *Servant of Yahweh* is at first applied by our prophet.

2. We say at first, for very soon the prophet has to make a distinction, and to sketch the *Servant* as something less than the actual nation. The distinction is obscure; it has stirred much controversy. But it is so natural, where a nation is the subject, and of such frequent occurrence in other literatures, that we may almost state it as a general law.

In all the passages quoted above, Israel has been spoken of in the passive mood, as the object of some affection or action on the part of God: *loved, formed, chosen, called, and about to be redeemed by Him.* Now, so long as a people thus lie passive, their prophet will naturally think of them as a whole. In their shadow his eye sees them in the outline of their mass; in their common suffering and servitude his heart will go out to all their individuals, as equally dear and equally in need of redemption. But when the hour comes for the people to work out their own salvation, and they emerge into action, it must needs be different. When they are no more the object only of their prophet's



affection, but pass under the test of his experience and judgement, then distinctions naturally appear upon them. Lifted to the light of their destiny, their inequality becomes apparent ; tried by its strain, part of them break away. And so, though the prophet continues still to call on the nation by its name to fulfil its calling, what he means by that name is no longer the bulk and body of the citizenship. A certain ideal of the people fills his vision—an ideal, however, which is no mere spectre floating above his own generation, but is realised in their nobler and aspiring portion—although his ignorance as to the exact size of this portion, must always leave his image of them more or less ideal to his eyes. It will be their quality rather than their quantity that is clear to him. In modern history we have two illustrations of this process of winnowing and idealising a people in the light of their destiny, which may prepare us for the more obscure instance of it in our prophecy.

In a well-known passage in the *Areopagitica*, Milton exclaims, 'Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself and shaking her invincible locks ; methinks I see her as an eagle mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam, . . . while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about, amazed at what she means.' In this passage the 'nation' is no longer what Milton meant by the term in the earlier part of his treatise, where 'England' stands simply for the outline of the whole English people ; but the 'nation' is the true genius of England realised in her enlightened and aspiring sons, and breaking away from the hindering and debasing members of the body politic—the timorous and flocking birds with those also that love the twilight



—who are indeed Englishmen after the flesh, but form no part of the nation's better self.

Or, recall Mazzini's bitter experience. To no man was his Italy more really one than to this ardent son of hers, who loved every born Italian because he was an Italian, and counted none of the fragments of his unhappy country too petty or too corrupt to be included in the hope of her restoration. To Mazzini's earliest imagination, it was the whole Italian seed, who were ready for redemption, and would rise to achieve it at his summons. But when his summons came, how few responded, and after the first struggles how fewer still remained ! Mazzini himself has told us with breaking heart. The real Italy was but a handful of born Italians ; at times it seemed to shrink to the prophet alone. From such a core the conscience indeed spread again, till the entire people was delivered from tyranny and from schism, and now every peasant and burgher from the Alps to Sicily understands what Italy means, and is proud to be an Italian. But for a time Mazzini and his few comrades stood alone. Others of their blood and speech were Piedmontese, Pope's men, Neapolitans,—merchants, lawyers, scholars,—or merely selfish and sensual. Mazzini and his remnant alone were Italians ; they alone were Italy.

It is a similar winnowing process, through which we see our prophet's thoughts pass with regard to Israel. Him, too, experience teaches that *the many are called, but the few chosen*. So long as his people lie in the shadow of captivity, so long as he has to speak of them in the passive mood, the object of God's call and preparation, it is *their seed*, the born people in bulk and mass, whom he names Israel, and entitles *the Servant of Yahweh*. But the moment that he lifts them to their mission in the world, and to the light

of their destiny, a difference becomes apparent upon them, and the Servant of Yahweh, though still called Israel, shrinks to something less than the living generation, draws off to something finer than the mass of the people. How, indeed, could it be otherwise with this strange people, than which no nation on earth had a loftier ideal identified with its history, or more frequently turned upon its better self, with a sword in its hand. Israel, though created a nation by God for His service, was always what Paul found it, divided into an *Israel after the flesh*, and an *Israel after the spirit*. But it was in the Exile that this distinction gaped most broad. With the fall of Jerusalem, the political framework, which kept the different elements of the nation together, was shattered, and these were left loose to the action of moral forces. The baser elements were absorbed by heathendom; the nobler, that remained loyal to the divine call, were free to assume a new and ideal form. Every year spent in Babylonia made it more apparent that the true and effective Israel of the future would not coincide with all the *seed of Jacob*, who went into exile. Numbers of the latter were as contented with their Babylonian circumstance as numbers of Mazzini's 'Italians' were satisfied to live on as Austrian or Papal subjects. Many became idolaters; many more settled down into the prosperous habits of Babylonian commerce, while a large multitude besides were scattered out of sight across the world. It required little insight to perceive that the true, effective Israel—the real *Servant of Yahweh*—must needs be a much smaller body than the sum of all these: a loyal kernel within Israel, who were still conscious of the national calling, and capable of carrying it out; who stood sensible of their duty to the whole world, but whose first conscience

was for their lapsed and lost countrymen. This Israel within Israel was the real *Servant of the Lord*; to personify it in that character—however vague might be the actual proportion it would assume in his own or in any other generation—would be as natural to our dramatic prophet as to personify the nation as a whole.

All this very natural process—this passing from the historical Israel, the nation originally designed by God to be His Servant, to the conscious and effective Israel, that uncertain quantity within the present and every future generation—takes place in the chapters before us; and will be easy for us to follow if we only remember that our prophet is not a dogmatic theologian, careful to make clear each logical distinction, but a dramatic poet, who delivers his ideas in groups, tableaux, dialogues, interrupted by choruses; and who writes in a language incapable of expressing such delicate differences, except by dramatic contrasts, and by the one other figure of which he is so fond—paradox.

Perhaps the first traces of distinction between the real Servant and the whole nation are to be found in the Programme of his Mission in chap. xlii. 1-7. There it is said that the Servant is to be for a *covenant of the people* (ver. 6). I explain below why we are to understand *people* as here meaning Israel.<sup>1</sup> And in ver. 7

<sup>1</sup> The definite article is not used here with the word *people*, and hence the phrase has been taken by some in the vaguer sense of a *people's covenant*, as a general expression, along with its parallel clause, of the kind of influence the Servant was to exert, not on Israel, but on *any* people in the world; he was to be a *people's covenant*, and a *light for nations*. So practically Schultz, *A.T. Theologie*, 4th ed., p. 284. But the Hebrew word for people **עַם** is often used without the article to express the people Israel, just as the Hebrew word for land **אֶרֶץ** is often used without the article to express the land of Judah. (**הָאֶרֶץ** with the article, is in Isa. xl-lxvi the *Earth*). And in ch. xlix the phrase a *covenant of the people* again occurs, and in a context in which it can only mean a *covenant of the people*, Israel. Some render **עַם בְּרִית עַם** a *covenant people*. But in xlix. 8 this is plainly an impossible rendering.

it is said of the Servant that he is *to open blind eyes, bring forth from prison the captive, from the house of bondage dwellers in darkness*: phrases that are descriptive, of course, of the captive Israel. Already, then, in chap. xlii the Servant is something distinct from the whole nation, whose Covenant and Redeemer he is to be.

The next references to the Servant are a couple of paradoxes, which are evidently the prophet's attempt to show *why* it was necessary to draw in the Servant of Yahweh from the whole to a part of the people. The first of these paradoxes is in chap. xlii. ver. 18.

*Ye deaf, hearken ! and ye blind, look ye to see !  
Who is blind but My Servant, and deaf as My Messenger  
I send ?*

*Who is blind as Meshullam, or deaf<sup>1</sup> as the Servant of  
Yahweh ?*

*Vision of many things—and thou dost not observe,  
Opening of ears and he hears not !*

The context shows that the Servant here—or Meshullam, as he is called, the *devoted* or *submissive one*, from the same root, and of much the same form as the Arabic Muslim <sup>2</sup>—is the whole people; but they are entitled *Servant* only in order to show how unfit they are for the task to which they have been designated, and what a paradox their title is beside their real character. God had given them every opportunity by *making great His instruction* (ver. 21, cf. p. 148), and, when that failed, by His sore discipline in exile (vv. 24, 25). *For who gave Jacob for spoil and Israel to*

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 148, n. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Meshullam is found as a proper name in the historical books of the Old Testament, especially Nehemiah, *e.g.*, iii. 4, 6, 30.

*the robbers? Did not Yahweh? . . . And poured upon him the heat of His anger and the fury of war. But even this did not awake the dull nation. Though it set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it kindled upon him, yet he laid it not to heart.* The nation as a whole had been favoured with God's revelation; as a whole they had been brought into His purifying furnace of the Exile. But as they have benefited by neither the one nor the other, the natural conclusion is that as a whole they are no more fit to be God's Servant. Such is the hint which this paradox is intended to give us.

But a little further on there is an obverse paradox, which plainly says, that although the people are blind and deaf as a whole, still the capacity for service is found among them alone (xliii. 8, 10).

*Bring forth the blind people—yet eyes are there!  
And the deaf, yet ears have they! . . .*

*Ye are My witnesses, rede of Yahweh, and My Servants  
whom I have chosen.*

The preceding verses (vv. 1-7) show us that it is again the whole people, in their bulk and scattered fragments, who are referred to. Blind though they be, *yet are there eyes* among them; deaf though they be, *yet they have ears*. And so the Lord addresses them all, in contradistinction to the heathen peoples (ver. 9), as His Servant.

These two complementary paradoxes together show this: that while Israel as a whole is unfit to be the Servant, it is nevertheless within Israel, alone of all the world's nations, that the true capacities for service are found—*eyes are there, ears have they*. They prepare us for the Servant's testimony about himself, in which,



while he owns himself to be distinct from Israel as a whole, he is nevertheless still called Israel. This is given in chap. xlix. *And He said unto me, My Servant art thou ; Israel, in whom I will glorify Myself. . . . And now saith Yahweh, my former from the womb to be a Servant unto Him, to turn again Jacob to Him, and that Israel might not be destroyed ; and I am of value in the eyes of Yahweh, and my God is my strength. And He said, It is too light for thy being My Servant, merely to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel ; I will also set thee for a light of nations, to be My salvation to the end of the earth* (xlix. 3-6). Here the Servant, though still called Israel, is clearly distinct from the nation as a whole, for part of his work is to raise the nation up again. And, moreover, he tells us this as his own testimony about himself. He is no longer spoken of in the third person, he speaks for himself in the first. This is significant. It is more than a mere artistic figure, the effect of our prophet's dramatic style—as if the Servant now stood opposite him, so vivid and near that he heard him speak, and quoted him in the direct form of speech. It is more probably the result of moral sympathy : the prophet speaks out of the heart of the Servant, in the name of that better portion of Israel which was already conscious of the Divine call, and of its distinction in this respect from the mass of the people.

It is futile to inquire what this better portion of Israel actually was, for whom the prophet speaks in the first person. Some have argued, from the stress which the speaker lays upon his gifts of speech and office of preaching, that what is now signified by the Servant is the order of the prophets ; but such forget that in these chapters the proclamation of the Kingdom of God is the ideal, not of prophets only, but of the whole people.



Sion as a whole is to be *heraldess of good news* (xl. 9). It is, therefore, not the official function of the prophet-order which the Servant here owns, but the ideal of the prophet-nation. Others have argued from the direct form of speech, that the prophet puts himself forward as the Servant. But no individual would call himself Israel. And as Professor Cheyne remarks, the passage is altogether too self-assertive to be spoken by any man of himself as an individual; although, of course, our prophet could not have spoken of the true Israel with such sympathy, unless he had himself been part of it. The writer of these verses may have been, for the time, as virtually the real Israel as Mazzini was the real Italy. But still he does not speak as an individual. The passage is manifestly a piece of personification. The Servant is *Israel*—not now the nation as a whole, not the body and bulk of the Israelites, for they are to be the object of his first efforts, but the loyal, conscious, and effective Israel, realised in some of her members, and here personified by our prophet, who himself speaks for her out of his heart, in the first person.

By chap. xlix then, the Servant of the Lord is a personification of the true, effective Israel as distinguished from the mass of the nation—a Personification, but not yet a Person. Something within Israel has wakened up to find itself conscious of being the Servant of Yahweh, and distinct from the mass of the nation—something that is not yet a Person. And this definition of the Servant may stand (with some modifications) for his next appearance in chap. l. 4-9. In this passage the Servant, still speaking in the first person, continues to illustrate his experience as a prophet, and carries it to its consequence in martyrdom. But let us notice that he now no longer calls himself *Israel*,

and that if it were not for the previous passages it would be natural to suppose that an individual was speaking. This supposition is confirmed by a verse that follows the Servant's speech, and is spoken, as chorus, by the Prophet himself. *Who among you is a fearer of Yahweh, obedient to the voice of His Servant, who walketh in darkness, and hath no light. Let him trust in the name of Yahweh, and stay himself upon his God.* In this too much neglected verse, which forms a real transition to chap. lii. 13–liii, the prophet is addressing any individual Israelite, on behalf of a personal God. It is very difficult to refrain from concluding that therefore the Servant also is a Person. Let us, however, not go beyond what we have evidence for; and note only that in chap. l the Servant is no more called Israel, and is represented not as if he were one part of the nation, over against the mass of it, but as if he were one individual over against other individuals; that in fine the Personification of chap. xlix has become more difficult to distinguish from an actual Person.

3. This brings us to the culminating passage—chap. lii. 13–liii. Is the Servant still a Personification here, or at last and unmistakably a Person?

It may relieve the air of that electricity, which is apt to charge it at the discussion of so classic a passage as this, and secure us calm weather in which to examine exegetical details, if we at once assert, what none but prejudiced Jews have ever denied, that this great prophecy, known as the fifty-third of Isaiah, was fulfilled in One Person, Jesus of Nazareth, and achieved in all its details by Him alone. But, on the other hand, it requires also to be pointed out that Christ's personal fulfilment of it does not necessarily imply that our prophet wrote it of a Person. The present expositor hopes, indeed, to be able to give strong reasons for

the theory usual among us, that the Personification of previous passages is at last in chap. liii presented as a Person. But he fails to understand, why critics should be regarded as unorthodox or at variance with New Testament teaching on the subject, who, while they acknowledge that only Christ fulfilled chap. liii, are yet unable to believe that the prophet looked upon the Servant as an individual, and who regard chap. liii as simply a sublimer form of the prophet's previous pictures of the ideal people of God. Surely Christ could and did fulfil prophecies other than personal ones. The types of Him, which the New Testament quotes from the Old Testament, are not exclusively individuals. Christ is sometimes represented as realising in His Person and work statements, which, as they were first spoken, could only refer to Israel, the nation. Matthew, for instance, applies to Jesus a text which Hosea wrote primarily of the whole Jewish people: *Out of Egypt have I called My Son.*<sup>1</sup> Or, to take an instance from our own prophet—who but Jesus fulfilled chap. xlix, in which, as we have seen, it is not an individual, but the ideal of the prophet people, that is figured? So that, even if it were proved past all doubt—proved from grammar, context, and every prophetic analogy—that in writing chap. liii our prophet had still in view that aspect of the nation which he has personified in chap. xlix, such a conclusion would not weaken the connection between the prophecy and its unquestioned fulfilment by Jesus Christ, nor render the two less evidently part of one Divine design.

But we are by no means compelled to adopt the impersonal view of chap. liii. On the contrary, while the question is one, to which all experts know the

<sup>1</sup> Hosea xi. 1 ; Matt. ii. 15.

difficulty of finding an absolutely conclusive answer one way or the other, it seems to me that reasons prevail, which make for the personal interpretation.

Let us see what exactly are the objections to taking chap. lii. 13–liii in a personal sense. First, it is very important to observe, that they do not rise out of the grammar or language of the passage. The reference of both of these is consistently individual. Throughout, the Servant is spoken of in the singular.<sup>1</sup> The name Israel is not once applied to him : nothing—except that the nation has also suffered—suggests that he is playing a national rôle ; in his fate there is no reflection of the features of the Exile. The antithesis, which was evident in previous passages, between a better Israel and the mass of the people has disappeared. The Servant is contrasted, not with the nation as a whole, but with His people as individuals. *All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and Yahweh hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.* As far as grammar can, this surely distinguishes a single person. It is true, that one or two phrases suggest so colossal a figure—*he shall startle many nations, and kings shall shut their mouths at him*—that for a moment we think of the spectacle of a people rather than of a solitary human presence. But even such descriptions are not incompatible with a single person.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, there are phrases which we can scarcely think are used of any but a historical individual ;

<sup>1</sup> Of all the expressions used of him the only one which shows a real tendency to a plural reference is *in his deaths* (ver. 9), and even it (if it is the correct reading) is quite capable of application to an individual who suffered such manifold martyrdom as is set forth in the passage.

<sup>2</sup> Not one word in them betrays any sense of a body of men or an ideal people standing behind them, which sense surely some expression would have betrayed, if it had been in the prophet's mind.

such as that he was taken from *oppression and judgement*, that is from a process of law which was tyranny, from a judicial murder, and that he belonged to a particular generation—*As for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living*. Surely a historical individual is the natural meaning of these words. And, in fact, critics like Ewald and Wellhausen, who interpret the passage, in its present context, of the ideal Israel, find themselves forced to argue, that it has been borrowed for this use from the older story of some actual martyr—so individual do its references seem to them throughout.

If, then, the grammar and language of the passage thus conspire to convey the impression of an individual, what are the objections to supposing that an individual is meant? Critics have felt, in the main, three objections to the discovery of a historical individual in Isa. lii. 13–liii.

The *first* of these that we take is chronological, and arises from the late date to which we have found it necessary to assign the prophecy. Our prophet, it is averred, associates the work of the Servant with the restoration of the people; but he sees that restoration too close to him to be able to think of the appearance, ministry, and martyrdom of a real historic life happening before it. (Our prophet, it will be remembered, wrote about 546, and the Restoration came in 538.) ‘There is no room for a history like that of the suffering Servant between the prophet’s place and the Restoration.’<sup>1</sup>

Now, this objection might be turned, even if it were true that the prophet identified the suffering Servant’s career with so immediate and so short a process as the

<sup>1</sup> A. B. D., in a review of the last edition of Delitzsch’s *Isaiah*, in the *Theol. Review*, iv, p. 276.



political deliverance from Babylon. For, in that case, the prophet would not be leaving less room for the Servant, than, in chap. ix, Isaiah himself leaves for the birth, the growth to manhood, and the victories of the Prince-of-the-Four-Names, before that immediate relief from the Assyrian, which he expects the Prince to effect. But does our prophet identify the suffering Servant's career with the redemption from Babylon and the Return? It is plain that he does not—at least in those portraits of the Servant, which are most personal. Our prophet has really two prospects for Israel—one, the actual deliverance from Babylon; the other, a spiritual redemption and restoration. If, like his fellow prophets, he sometimes runs these two together, and talks of the latter in the terms of the former, he keeps them on the whole distinct, and assigns them to different agents. The burden of the first he lays on Cyrus, though he also connects it with the Servant, while the Servant is still to him an aspect of the nation (see xlix. 8*a*, 9*b*). It is temporary, and soon passes from his thoughts, Cyrus being dropped with it. But the other, the spiritual redemption, is confined to no limits of time; and it is with its process—indefinite in date and in length of period—that he associates the most personal portraits of the Servant (chap. i and lii. 13–liii). In these the Servant, now spoken of as an individual, has nothing to do with that work of freeing the people from Babylon, which was over in a year or two, and which seems to be now behind the prophet's standpoint. His is the enduring office of prophecy, sympathy, and expiation—an office in which there is all possible 'room' for such a historical career as is sketched for him. His relation to Cyrus, before whose departure from connection with Israel's fate the Servant does not appear as a person, is thus most interesting. Perhaps we may



best convey it in a homely figure. On the ship of Israel's fortunes—as on every ship and on every voyage—the prophet sees two personages. One is the Pilot through the shallows, Cyrus, who is dropped as soon as the shallows are past ; and the other is the Captain of the ship, who remains always identified with it—the Servant. The Captain does not come to the front till the Pilot has gone ; but, both alongside the Pilot, and after the Pilot has been dropped, there is every room for his office.

The *second* main objection to identifying an individual in chap. lii. 13–liii is, that an individual with such features has no analogy in Hebrew prophecy. It is said that, neither in his humiliation, nor in the kind of exaltation, which is ascribed to him, is there his like in any other individual in the Old Testament, and certainly not in the Messiah. Elsewhere in Scripture (it is averred) the Messiah reigns, and is glorious ; it is the people who suffer, and come through suffering to power. Nor is the Messiah's royal splendour at all the same as the very vague influence, evidently of a spiritual kind, which is attributed to the Servant in the end of chap. liii. The Messiah is endowed with the military and political virtues. He is a warrior, a king, a judge. *He sits on the throne of David, He establishes David's kingdom. He smites the land with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He slays the wicked.* But very different phrases are used of the Servant. He is not called king, though kings shut their mouths at him,—he is a prophet and a martyr, and an expiation ; and the phrases, *I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,* are simply metaphors of the immense spiritual success and influence with which His self-sacrifice shall be rewarded ; as a spiritual power He shall take His

place among the dominions and forces of the world. This is a true prophecy of what Israel, that *worm of a people*, should be lifted to; but it is quite different from the political throne, from which Isaiah had promised that the Messiah should sway the destinies of Israel and mankind.

But, in answer to this objection to finding the Messiah, or any other influential individual, in chap. liii, we may remember that there were already traces in Hebrew prophecy of a suffering Messiah: we come across them in chap. vii. There Isaiah presents Immanuel, whom we identified with the Prince-of-the-Four-Names in chap. ix, as at first nothing but a sufferer—a sufferer from the sins of His predecessors.<sup>1</sup> And, even though we are wrong in taking the suffering Immanuel for the Messiah, and though Isaiah meant him only as a personification of Israel suffering for the error of Ahaz, had not the two hundred years, which elapsed between Isaiah's prophecy of Israel's glorious Deliverer, been full of room enough, and, what is more, of experience enough, for the ideal champion of the people to be changed to something more spiritual in character and in work? Had the nation been baptised, for most of those two centuries, in vain, in the meaning of suffering, and in vain had they seen exemplified in their noblest spirits the fruits and glory of self-sacrifice?<sup>2</sup> The type of Hero had changed in Israel since Isaiah wrote of his Prince-of-the-Four-Names. The king had been replaced by the prophet; the conqueror by the martyr; the judge, who smote the land by the rod of his mouth, and slew the wicked by the breath of his lips, by the patriot who took his country's sins upon his

<sup>1</sup> *Isaiah* I, i-xxxix, pp. 112 ff.; but see what is said there also in support of the interpretation that Immanuel was not a sufferer.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 43 ff.

own conscience. The monarchy had perished ; men knew that, even if Israel were set upon their own land again, it would not be under an independent king of their own ; nor was a Jewish champion of the martial kind, such as Isaiah had promised for deliverance from the Assyrian, any more required. Cyrus, the Gentile, should do all the campaigning required against Israel's enemies, and Israel's native Saviour be relieved for gentler methods and more spiritual aims. It is all this experience, of nearly two centuries, which explains the absence of the features of warrior and judge from chap. liii, and their replacement by those of a suffering patriot, prophet, and priest. The reason of the change is, not because the prophet who wrote the chapter had not, as much as Isaiah, an individual in his view, but because, in the historical circumstance of the Exile, such an individual as Isaiah had promised, seemed no longer probable or required.

So far, then, from the difference between chap. liii and previous prophecies of the Messiah affording evidence that in chap. liii it is not the Messiah who is presented, this very change, which has taken place, explicable as it is from the history of the intervening centuries, goes powerfully to prove that it is the Messiah, and therefore an individual, whom the prophet so vividly describes.

The *third* main objection to our recognising an individual in chap. liii is concerned only with our prophet himself. Is it not impossible, say some—or at least improbably inconsistent—for the same prophet first to have identified the Servant with the nation, and then to present him to us as an individual ? We can understand the transference by the same writer of the name from the whole people to a part of the people ; it is a natural transference, and the prophet

sufficiently explains it. But how does he get from a part of the nation to a single individual? If in chap. xlix he personifies, under the name *Servant*, some aspect of the nation, we are surely bound to understand the same personification when the *Servant* is again introduced—unless we have an explanation to the contrary. But we have none. The prophet gives no hint, except by dropping the name *Israel*, that the focus of his vision is altered,—no more paradoxes such as marked his passage from the people as a whole to a portion of them,—no consciousness that any explanation whatever is required. Therefore, however much finer the personification is drawn in chap. liii than in chap. xlix, it is surely a personification still.

To which objection an obvious answer is, that our prophet is not a systematic theologian, but a dramatic poet, who allows his characters to disclose themselves and their relation without himself intervening to define or relate them. And anyone who is familiar with the literature of *Israel* knows, that no less than the habit of drawing in from the whole people upon a portion of them, was the habit of drawing in from a portion of the people upon one individual. The royal *Messiah* Himself is a case in point. The original promise to *David* was of a seed; but soon prophecy concentrated the seed in one glorious Prince. The promise of *Israel* had always culminated in an individual. Then, again, in the nation's awful sufferings, it had been one man—the prophet *Jeremiah*—who had stood forth singly and alone, at once the incarnation of *Yahweh's* word, and the illustration in his own person of all the penalty that *Yahweh* laid upon the sinful people. With this tendency of his school to focus *Israel's* hope on a single individual, and especially with the example of *Jeremiah* before him, it is almost inconceivable that our prophet

could have thought of any but an individual when he drew his portrait of the suffering Servant. No doubt the national sufferings were in his heart as he wrote ; it was probably a personal share in them that taught him to write so sympathetically about the Man of pains, who was familiar with ailing. But to gather and concentrate all these sufferings upon one noble figure, to describe this figure as thoroughly conscious of their moral meaning, and capable of turning them to his people's salvation, was a process absolutely in harmony with the genius of Israel's prophecy, as well as with the trend of their recent experience ; and there is, besides, no word in that great chapter, in which the process culminates, but is in thorough accordance with it. So far, therefore, from its being an impossible or an unlikely thing for our prophet to have at last reached his conception of an individual, it is almost impossible to conceive of him executing so personal a portrait as chap. lii. 13–liii, without thinking of a definite historical personage, such as Hebrew prophecy had ever associated with the redemption of his people.

4. We have now exhausted the passages in Isa. xl–lxvi which deal with the Servant of the Lord. We have found that our prophet identifies him at first with the whole nation, and then with some indefinite portion of the nation—indefinite in quantity, but most marked in character ; that this personification grows more and more difficult to distinguish from a person ; and that in chap. lii. 13–liii there are very strong reasons, both in the text itself and in the analogy of other prophecy, to suppose that the portrait of an individual is intended. To complete our study of this development of the substance of the Servant, it is necessary to notice that it runs almost stage for stage with a development of his office. Up to chap. xlix, that is to say, while he is still



some aspect of the people, the Servant is a prophet. In chap. 1, where he is no longer called Israel, and approaches more nearly to an individual, his prophecy passes into martyrdom. And in chap. liii, where at last we recognise him as intended for an actual personage, his martyrdom becomes an expiation for the sins of the people. Is there a natural connection between these two developments? We have seen that it was by a very common process that our prophet transferred the national calling from the mass of the nation to a select few of the people. Is it by any equally natural tendency that he shrinks from the many to the few, as he passes from prophecy to martyrdom, or from the few to the one, as he passes from martyrdom to expiation? It is a possibility for all God's people to be prophets: few are needed as martyrs. Is it by any moral law equally clear, that only one man should die for the people? These are questions worth thinking about. In Israel's history we have already found the following facts with which to answer them. The whole living generation of Israel felt themselves to be sin-bearers. *Our fathers have sinned, and we bear their iniquities.* This conscience and penalty were more painfully felt by the righteous in Israel. But the keenest and heaviest sense of them was conspicuously that experienced by one man—the prophet Jeremiah.<sup>1</sup> And yet all these cases from the past of Israel's history do not furnish more than an approximation to the figure presented to us in chap. liii. Let us turn, therefore, to the future to see if we can find in it motive or fulfilment for this marvellous prophecy.

<sup>1</sup> See ch. ii of this volume.



## CHAPTER XVII

### THE SERVANT OF THE LORD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

**I**N last chapter we confined our study of the Servant of the Lord to the text of Isa. xl-lxvi, and to the previous and contemporary history of Israel. Into our interpretation of the remarkable Figure, whom our prophet has drawn for us, we have put nothing which cannot be gathered from those fields and by the light of the prophet's own day. But now we must travel further, and from days far future to our prophet borrow a fuller light to throw back upon his mysterious projections. We take this journey into the future for reasons he himself has taught us. We have learned that his pictures of the Servant are not the creation of his own mind; a work of art complete 'through fancy's or through logic's aid.' They are the scattered reflections and suggestions of experience. The prophet's eyes have been opened to read them out of the still growing and incomplete history of his people. With that history they are bound up. Their plainest forms are but a transcript of its clearest facts; their paradoxes are its paradoxes (reflections now of the confused and changing consciousness of this strange people, or again of the contrast between God's design for them and their real character): their ideals are the suggestion and promise which its course reveals to an inspired

eye. Thus, in picturing the Servant, our prophet sometimes confines himself to history that has already happened to Israel; but sometimes, also, upon the purpose and promise of this, he outruns what has happened, and plainly lifts his voice from the future. Now we must remember that he does so, not merely because the history itself has native possibilities of fulfilment in it, but because he believes that it is in the hands of an Almighty and Eternal God, who shall surely guide it to the end of His purpose revealed in it. It is an article of our prophet's creed, that the God who speaks through him controls all history, and by His prophets *can publish beforehand* what course it will take; so that, when we find in our prophet anything we do not see fully justified or illustrated by the time he wrote, it is only in observance of the conditions he has laid down that we seek for its explanation in the future.

Let us, then, take our prophet upon his own terms, and follow the history, with which he has so closely bound up the prophecy of the Servant, both in suggestion and fulfilment, in order that we may see whether it will yield to us the secret of what, if we have read his language aright, his eyes perceived in it—the promise of an Individual Servant. And let us do so in his faith, that history is one progressive and harmonious movement under the hand of the God in whose name he speaks. Our exploration will be rewarded, and our faith confirmed. We shall find the nation, as promised, restored to its own land, and pursuing through the centuries its own life. We shall find within the nation what the prophet looked for,—an elect and effective portion, with the conscience of a national service to the world but looking for the achievement of this to such an Individual Servant, as the prophet seemed

ultimately to foreshadow. The world itself we shall find growing more and more open to this service. And at last, from Israel's national conscience of the service we shall see emerge One with the sense that He alone is responsible and able for it. And this One Israelite will not only in His own person exhibit a character and achieve a work, that illustrate and far excel our prophet's highest imaginations, but will also become, to a new Israel infinitely more numerous than the old, the conscience and inspiration of their collective fulfilment of the ideal.

1. In the Old Testament we cannot be sure of any further appearance of our prophet's Servant of the Lord. It might be thought, that in a post-exilic promise, Zechariah iii. 8, *I will bring forth My Servant the Branch*, we had an identification of the hero of the first part of the Book of Isaiah, *the Branch out of Jesse's roots* (xi. 1), with the hero of the second part; but *servant* here may so easily be meant in the more general sense in which it occurs in the Old Testament, that we are not justified in finding any more particular connection. In Judaism beyond the Old Testament the national and personal interpretations of the Servant were both current. The Targum of Jonathan, and both the Talmud of Jerusalem and the Talmud of Babylon, recognise the personal Messiah in chap. liii; the Targum also identifies him as early as in chap. xlii. This personal interpretation the Jews abandoned only after they had entered on their controversy with Christian theologians; and in the cruel persecutions, which Christians inflicted upon them throughout the middle ages, they were supplied with only too many reasons for insisting that chap. liii was prophetic of

suffering Israel—the martyr-people—as a whole.<sup>1</sup> It is a strange history—the history of our race, where the first through their pride and error so frequently become the last, and the last through their sufferings are set in God's regard with the first. But of all its strange reversals none surely was ever more complete than when the followers of Him, who is set forth in this passage, the unresisting and crucified Saviour of men, behaved in His Name with so great a cruelty as to be righteously taken by His enemies for the very tyrants and persecutors whom the passage condemns.

2. But it is in the New Testament that we see the most perfect reflection of the Servant of the Lord, both as People and Person.

In the generation, from which Jesus sprang, there was, amid national circumstances closely resembling those in which the Second Isaiah was written, a counterpart of that Israel within Israel, which our prophet has personified in chap. xlix. The holy nation lay again in bondage to the heathen, partly in its own land, partly scattered across the world; and Israel's righteousness, redemption, and ingathering were once more the questions of the day. The thoughts of the masses, as of old in Babylonian days, did not rise beyond a political restoration; and although their popular leaders insisted upon national righteousness as necessary to this, it was a righteousness mainly of a ceremonial kind—hard,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Jewish Interpreters on Isaiah, liii*, Driver and Neubauer, Oxford, 1877. Abravanel, who himself takes ch. liii in a national sense, admits, after giving the Christian interpretation, that 'in fact Jonathan ben Uziel, "the Targumist," applied it to the Messiah, who was still to come, and this is likewise the opinion of the wise in many of their Midrashim.' And R. Moscheh al Shech, of the sixteenth century, says: 'See, our masters have with one voice held as established and handed down, that here it is King Messiah who is spoken of.' (Both these passages quoted by Bredenkamp in his commentary, p. 307.)

legal, and often more unlovely in its want of enthusiasm and hope than even the political fanaticism of the vulgar. But around the temple, and in quiet recesses of the land, a number of pious and ardent Israelites lived on the true milk of the word, and cherished for the nation hopes of a far more spiritual character. If the Pharisees laid their emphasis on the law, this chosen Israel drew their inspiration rather from prophecy; and of all prophecy it was the Book of Isaiah, and chiefly the latter part of it on which they lived.

As we enter the Gospel history from the Old Testament, we feel at once that our Prophecy is in the air. In this fair opening of the new year of the Lord, the harbinger notes of the book awaken about us on all sides like the voices of birds come back with the spring. In Mary's song, the phrase *He hath holpen His Servant Israel*; in the description of Simeon, that he waited for the *consolation of Israel*, a phrase taken from the *Comfort ye, comfort ye My people* in Isa. xl. 1; such frequent phrases, too, as *the redemption of Jerusalem, a light of the Gentiles and the glory of Israel, light to them that sit in darkness*, and other echoed promises of light and peace and the remission of sins, are all repeated from our evangelical prophecy. In the fragments of the Baptist's preaching, which are extant, it is remarkable that almost every metaphor and motive may be referred to the Book of Isaiah, and mostly to its exilic half: *the generation of vipers*,<sup>1</sup> *the trees and axe laid to the root*,<sup>2</sup> *the threshing floor and fan*,<sup>3</sup> *the fire*,<sup>4</sup> *the bread and clothes to the poor*,<sup>5</sup> and especially the proclamation of Jesus, *Behold the Lamb of God that beareth the sin of*

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lix. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vi. 13; ix. 18; x. 17, 34; xlvii. 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, xxi. 10; xxviii. 27; xl. 24; xli. 15 ff.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 31; xlvii. 14.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, lviii. 7.



*the world.*<sup>1</sup> To John himself were applied the words of Isa. xl: *The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make ye ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight*; and when Christ sought to rouse again the Baptist's failing faith it was of Isa. lxi that He reminded him.

Our Lord, then, sprang from a generation of Israel, which had a strong conscience of the national aspect of the Service of God,—a generation with Isa. xl–lxvi at its heart. We have seen how He Himself insisted upon the uniqueness of Israel's place among the nations—*salvation is of the Jews*—and how closely He identified Himself with His people—*I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*. But all Christ's strong expression of Israel's distinction from the rest of mankind, is weak and dim compared with His expression of His own distinction from the rest of Israel. If they were the one people with whom God worked in the world, He was the one Man, whom God sent to work upon them, and to use them to work upon others. We cannot tell how early the sense of this distinction came to the Son of Mary. Luke reveals it in Him, before He had taken His place as a citizen and was still within the family: *Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?* At His first public appearance He had it fully, and others acknowledged it. In the opening year of His ministry it threatened to be only a Distinction of the First—*they took Him by force, and would have made Him King*. But as time went on it grew evident that it was to be, not the Distinction of the First, but the Distinction of the Only. The enthusiastic crowds melted away: the small band, whom He had most imbued with His spirit, proved

<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly taken from Isa. liii.



that they could follow Him but a certain length in His consciousness of His Mission. Recognising in Him the supreme prophet—*Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life*—they immediately failed to understand, that suffering also must be endured by Him for the people: *Be it far from Thee, Lord*. This suffering was His conscience and His burden alone. Now, we cannot overlook the fact, that the point at which Christ's way became so solitary was the same point at which we felt our prophet's language cease to oblige us to understand by it a portion of the people, and begin to be applicable to a single individual,—the point, namely, where prophecy passes into martyrdom. But whether our prophet's pictures of the suffering and atoning Servant of the Lord are meant for some aspect of the national experience, or as the portrait of a real individual, it is certain that in His martyrdom and service of ransom Jesus felt Himself to be absolutely alone. He who had begun His Service of God, with the people on His side, consummated the same with the leaders and the masses of the nation against Him, and without a single partner from among His own friends, either in the fate which overtook Him, or in the conscience with which He bore it.

Now all this parallel between Jesus of Nazareth and the Servant of the Lord is unmistakable enough, even in this mere outline; but the details of the Gospel narrative and the language of the Evangelists still more emphasise it. Christ's herald hailed Him with words which gather up the essence of Isa. liii: *Behold the Lamb of God*. He read His own commission from chap. lxi: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me*. To describe His first labours among the people, His disciples again used words from chap. liii: *Himself bare*

our sicknesses. To paint His manner of working in face of opposition they quoted the whole passage from chap. xlii : *Behold My Servant . . . He shall not strive.* The name Servant was often upon His own lips in presenting Himself : *Behold, I am among you as one that serveth.* When His office of prophecy passed into martyrdom, He predicted for Himself the treatment which is detailed in chap. l,—the *smiting, plucking, and spitting* : and in time, by Jew and Gentile, this treatment was inflicted on Him to the very letter.<sup>1</sup> As to His consciousness in fulfilling something more than a martyrdom, and alone among the martyrs of Israel offering by His death an expiation for His people's sins, His own words are frequent and clear enough to form a counterpart to chap. liii. With them before us, we cannot doubt that He felt Himself to be the One of whom the people in that chapter speak, as standing over against them all, sinless, and yet bearing their sins. But on the night on which He was betrayed, while just upon the threshold of this extreme and unique form of service, into which it has been given to no soul of man, that ever lived, to be conscious of following Him—as if anxious that His disciples should not be so overwhelmed by the awful part in which they could not imitate Him as to forget the countless other ways in which they were called to fulfil His serving spirit—*He took a towel and girded Himself, and when He had washed their feet, He said unto them, If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet*—thereby illustrating what is so plainly set forth in our prophecy, that short of the expiation, of which only One in His sinlessness has felt the obligation, and short of the martyrdom,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. with the Greek version of Isa. l. 4-7, Luke xviii. 31, 32 ; Matt. xxvi. 67.

which it has been given to but few of His people to share with Him, there are a thousand humble forms rising out of the needs of everyday life, in which men are called to employ towards one another the gentle and self-forgetful methods of the true Servant of God.

With the four Gospels in existence, no one doubts or can doubt that Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled the cry, *Behold My Servant*. With Him it ceased to be a mere ideal, and took its place as the greatest achievement in history.

3. In the earliest discourses of the Apostles, therefore, it is not wonderful that Jesus should be expressly designated by them as the Servant of God,—the Greek word used being that by which the Septuagint specially translates the Hebrew term in Isa. xl–lxvi <sup>1</sup>: *God hath glorified His Servant Jesus. Unto you first, God, having raised up His Servant, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities. . . . In this city against Thy holy Servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel foreordained to pass. Grant that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Thy Holy Servant Jesus.* <sup>2</sup> It must also be noticed, that in one of the same addresses, and again by Stephen in his argument before the Sanhedrim, Jesus is called *The Righteous One*,<sup>3</sup> doubtless an allusion to the same title for the Servant in Isa. liii. 11.

<sup>1</sup> In Isa. xl–lxvi the Septuagint translates the Hebrew for Servant by one or other of two words—*pais* and *δουλος*. *Pais* is used in xli. 8; xlii. 1; xliv. 1 ff.; xlv. 21; xlv. 4; xlix. 6; l. 10; lii. 13. But *δουλος* is used in xlviii. 20; xlix. 3 and 5. In the Acts it is *pais* that is used of Christ; ‘An apostle is never called *pais* (but only *δουλος*) *Θεου*’ (Meyer). But David is called *pais* (Acts iv. 25).

<sup>2</sup> Acts iii. 13, 26; iv. 27–30.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 14; vii. 52.

Need we recall the interpretation of Isa. liii by Philip ? <sup>1</sup>

It is known to all how Peter develops this parallel in his First Epistle, borrowing the figures but oftener the very words of Isa. liii to apply to Christ. Like the Servant of the Lord, Jesus is *as a Lamb* : He is a patient sufferer in silence ; He *is the Righteous*—again the classic title—for *the unrighteous* ; in exact quotation from the Greek of Isa. liii : *He did no sin, neither was found guile in His mouth, ye were as sheep gone astray, but He Himself hath borne our sins, with whose stripes ye are healed.* <sup>2</sup>

Paul applies two quotations from Isa. lii. 13–liii to Christ : *I have striven to preach the Gospel not where Christ was named ; as it is written, To whom He was not spoken of they shall see : and they that have not heard shall understand ; and He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin.* <sup>3</sup> And none will doubt that when Paul so often disputed that the *Messiah must suffer*, or wrote *Messiah died for our sins according to the Scriptures*, he had Isa. liii in mind, exactly as we have seen it applied to the Messiah by Jewish scholars a hundred years later than Paul.

4. Paul, however, by no means confines the prophecy of the Servant of the Lord to Jesus the Messiah. In a way which has been too much overlooked by students of the subject, Paul revives and reinforces the collective interpretation of the Servant. He claims the Servant's duties and experience for himself, his fellow-labourers in the gospel, and all believers.

In Antioch of Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas said of themselves to the Jews : *For so hath the Lord*

<sup>1</sup> Acts viii. 30 ff.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter i. 19 ; ii. 22, 23 ; iii. 18,

<sup>3</sup> Rom. xv. 20 f. ; 2 Cor. v. 21.

commanded us saying, *I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation to the ends of the earth.*<sup>1</sup> Again, in the eighth of Romans, Paul takes the Servant's confident words, and speaks them of all God's true people. *He is near that justifieth me, who is he that condemneth me?* cried the Servant in our prophecy, and Paul echoes for all believers: *It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?*<sup>2</sup> And again, in his second letter to Timothy, he says, speaking of that pastor's work, *For the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle towards all;* words which were borrowed from, or suggested by, Isa. xlii. 1-3.<sup>3</sup> In these instances, as well as in his constant use of the terms *slave, servant, minister*, with their cognates, Paul fulfils the intention of Jesus, who so continually, by example, parable, and direct commission, enforced the life of His people as a Service to the Lord.

5. Such, then, is the New Testament reflection of the Prophecy of the Servant of the Lord, both as People and Person. Like all physical reflections, this moral one may be said, on the whole, to stand reverse to its original. In Isa. xl-lxvi the Servant is People first, Person second. But in the New Testament—except for a faint and scarcely articulate application to Israel in the beginning of the gospels—the Servant is Person first and People afterwards. The Divine Ideal which our prophet saw narrowing down from the Nation to an Individual, was owned and realised by Christ

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiii. 47, after Isa. xlix. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. l. 8, and Rom. viii. 33, 34.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 24. We may note, also, how Paul in Eph. vi takes the armour with which God is clothed in Isa. lix. 17, breastplate and helmet, and equips the individual Christian with them; and how, in the same passage, he takes for the Christian from Isa. xi the Messiah's girdle of truth and the *sword of the Spirit*,—*he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.*

But in Him it was not exhausted. With added warmth and light, with a new power of expansion, it passed through Him to fire the hearts and enlist the wills of an infinitely greater people than the Israel for whom it was originally designed. With this witness, then, of history to the prophecies of the Servant, our way in expounding and applying them is clear. Jesus Christ is their perfect fulfilment and illustration. But we who are His Church are to find in them our ideal and duty,—our duty to God and to the world. In this, as in so many other matters, the unfulfilled prophecy of Israel is the conscience of Christianity.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE SERVICE OF GOD AND MAN

ISAIAH XLII. 1-7

WE now understand, whom to regard as the Servant of the Lord. The Service of God was a commission to witness and prophesy for God upon earth, made out at first in the name of the entire nation Israel. When their unfitness as a whole became apparent, this was delegated to a portion of them. But as there were added to its duties of prophecy, those of martyrdom and atonement for the sins of the people, our prophet, it would seem, saw the Service focussed in the person of an individual.

In history Jesus Christ has fulfilled this commission both in its national and in its personal aspects. He realised the ideal of the prophet-people. He sacrificed Himself and made atonement for the sins of men. But having illustrated the service of God in the world, Christ did not exhaust it. He returned it to His people, a more clamant conscience than ever, and He also gave them grace to fulfil its demands. Through Christ the original destination of these prophecies becomes, as Paul saw, their ultimate destination as well. If Israel refused this Service or failed in it this only leaves it more clearly to His followers as their duty ; that Jesus fulfilled it not only confirms the duty, but adds hope and courage to discharge it.

Although the terms of this Service were published nearly two thousand five hundred years ago in a dialect of narrow limits, to a helpless tribe of captives, in a world long sunk in ruin, yet those terms are so free from all that is provincial or antiquated, so adapted to the lasting needs of humanity, so universal in their scope, so instinct with the love which never faileth, though prophecies fail and tongues cease—that to-day they come home to heart and conscience with as much tenderness and authority as ever. The earliest programme of them is given in chap. xlii. 1-7: in three quatrains of a clear text and regular metre, vv. 1-4, followed in vv. 5-7 by less regular lines, of which the text is somewhat impaired. The Authorised Version is one of unapproachable beauty, but its rhythm and emphases are not always those of the original. The following version is almost literal, and as true as translation can be to the order, rhythm, and emphases of the Hebrew text; recovering in particular, what is lost in the English Version (though marked in foot-notes by the Revisers) the application in the negative to the Servant of the same epithets as are previously used of the reed and the wick—*crushed* and *flickering*.

xlii. 1. *Behold My Servant, whom I uphold,  
My Chosen in whom My Soul delighteth.  
I have bestowed My Spirit upon him,  
He shall take forth the Law<sup>1</sup> to the nations.*

2. *He shall not cry, nor lift up,<sup>2</sup>  
Nor make his voice heard in the street.*

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *mishpat*, lit. a law or judgement, but here in the collective sense of all the laws or principles of Israel's religion; like the Arabic *din* it might be rendered *the Faith* or *Religion*.

<sup>2</sup> Cheyne, Marti, Box read *roar*.

- xlii. 3. *Reeds*<sup>1</sup> *that are crushed he shall not break,*  
*Flickering wicks*<sup>1</sup> *he shall not quench.*
4. *In utter troth*<sup>2</sup> *shall he bring forth the Law,*  
*He shall not flicker nor he be crushed,*<sup>3</sup>  
*Until he have set in the earth the Law ;*  
*For his revelation*<sup>4</sup> *the isles are waiting.*
5. *Thus sayeth Yahweh the God*<sup>5</sup>—  
*Who spread*<sup>6</sup> *the heavens and stretched them forth,*  
*Who created*<sup>6</sup> *the earth and her produce,*  
*Who giveth breath to the people upon her*  
*And spirit to them that walk therein.*
6. *I Yahweh called thee in righteousness*  
*And have taken hold of thy hand,*  
*Have formed and given thee for a people's cove-*  
*nant (?)*<sup>7</sup>  
*For a light to the nations—*
7. *To open the eyes that are blind.*  
*To bring forth from durance the captive,*  
*From prison the dwellers in darkness.*

### I. THE CONSCIENCE OF SERVICE

As several of these lines indicate, this is a Service to Man, but what we must fasten upon first is that before

<sup>1</sup> Both these words are in the Hebrew singular, but apparently in a collective sense.

<sup>2</sup> The Heb. **אמת** has here the meaning rather of *troth* than of *truth*.

<sup>3</sup> By a slight change of points, the passive of the same verb as above.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. *his Torah, instruction or revelation.* <sup>5</sup> So LXX.

<sup>6</sup> In the text these two verbs are conversely placed ; but most translators transpose them as above.

<sup>7</sup> Text uncertain. LXXB *εἰς διαθήκην γένους*, other codd. *εἰς δικαιοσύνην* ; some would read *peoples* (plur.) as LXX does in xlix. 8. Cheyne, *a covenant for the human folk.* Duhm rather impatiently proposes *a people's redemption.* So Box. The preceding verbs by a slight change of points are given in the perfect by most moderns instead of in the future as pointed in the text.

being a Service to Man it is a Service for God. *Behold, My Servant*, says God's commission very emphatically. And throughout the prophecy the Servant is presented as chosen of God, inspired of God, equipped of God, God's creature, God's instrument ; useful only because he is used, influential because he is influenced, victorious because he is obedient ; learning the methods of his work by daily wakefulness to God's voice, a good speaker only because he is first a good listener ; with no strength or courage but what God lends, and achieving all for God's glory. Notice how strongly it is said that God *holds by him, grasps him by the hand*. We shall see that his Service is as sympathetic and comprehensive a purpose for humanity as was ever dreamed in any thought or dared in any life. Whether we consider its tenderness for individuals, or its hope for the world, its gentle appreciation of all human effort and aspiration, or its conscience of mankind's chief evil, or the utterness of its self-sacrifice in order to redeem men,—we shall own it to be a programme of man's duty, and a prophecy of man's destiny, to which the growing experience of our race has been able to add nothing essential. But the Service becomes all that to man, because it first takes all that from God. Not only is the Servant's sense of duty to all humanity just the conscience of God's universal sovereignty,—for it is a never-to-be-forgotten fact that Israel recognised their God's right to the whole world, before they felt their own duty to mankind,—but the Servant's character and methods are the reflection of the Divine. Feature by feature the Servant corresponds to His Lord. His patience is but sympathy with Yahweh's righteousness,—*I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness*. His gentleness with the unfit and apparently unprofitable—*He breaks not off the crushed*

*reed nor quenches the flickering wick*—is but the temper of the everlasting God, who giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. His labour and passion and agony, even they have been anticipated in the Divine nature, for *Yahweh stirreth up zeal like a man of war ; He saith, I will cry out like a travailing woman.* In no detail is the Servant above his Master. His character is not original, but is the impress of his God's : *I have put My spirit upon him.*

There are many in our day who deny this indebtedness of the human character to the Divine, and in the Service of man would have us turn our backs upon God. Positivists, while admitting that the earliest enthusiasm of the individual for his race did originate in the love of a Divine Being, assert nevertheless that we have grown away from this illusory motive ; and that in the example of humanity itself we may find all the requisite impulse to serve it. The philosophy of history, which some Socialists have put forward, is even more explicit. According to them, mankind was disturbed in a primitive, tribal socialism—or service of each other—by the rise of spiritual religion, which drew the individual away from his kind and absorbed him in selfish relations to God. Such a stage, represented by the Hebrew and Christian faiths, and by the individualist political economy which has run concurrent with the later developments of Christianity, was (so these Socialists admit) perhaps necessary for temporary discipline and culture, like the land of Egypt to starved Jacob's children ; but like Egypt, when it turned out to be the house of bondage, the individualist economy and religion are now to be abandoned for the original land of promise,—Socialism once more, but universal instead of tribal as of old. Out of this analogy, which is such Socialists' own,

Sinai and the Ten Commandments are omitted. We are to march back to freedom without a God, and settle down to love and serve each other by administration.

But can we turn our backs on God, without hurting man? The natural history of philanthropy would seem to say that we cannot. This prophecy is one of its witnesses. Earliest ideal as it is of a universal service of mankind, it starts in its obligation from the universal Sovereignty of God; it starts in every one of its affections from some affection of the Divine character. And we have not grown away from the need of its everlasting sources. Cut off God from the Service of man, and the long habit and inherent beauty of that Service may perpetuate its customs for a few generations; but the inevitable call must come to subject conduct to the altered intellectual conditions, and in the absence of God every man's ideal shall surely turn from, How can I serve my neighbour? to, How can I make my neighbour serve me? As our prophet reminds us in his vivid contrast between Israel, the Servant of the Lord, and Babylon, *who saith in her heart: I am, and there is none beside me*, there are ultimately but two alternative lords of the human will, God and Self. If we revolt from the Authority and Example of the One, we shall surely become subject, in the long run, to the ignorance, short-sightedness, pedantry, and cruelty of the other. These words are used advisedly. With no sense of the sacredness of every human life as created in the image of God, and with no example of an Infinite Mercy before them, men would leave to perish all that was weak, or, from the limited point of view of a single community or generation, unprofitable. Some Positivists and those Socialists who do not include God in the society they seek to establish, admit that they expect something like that to follow from their denial of God.



In certain Positivist proposals for the reform of charity, we are told that the ideal scheme of social relief would be the one which limited itself to persons judged to be of use to the community as a whole ; that is, that in their succour of the weak, their bounty to the poor, and their care of the young, society should be guided, not by the eternal laws of justice and of mercy, but by the opinions of the representatives of the public for the time and by their standard of utility to the commonwealth. Your atheist-Socialist is still more frank. In the state, which he sees rising after he has got rid of Christianity, he would suppress, he tells us, all who preached such a thing as the fear of the future life, and he would not repeat the present exceptional legislation for the protection of women and children, for whom, he whines, far too much has been recently done in comparison with what has been enacted for the protection of men.<sup>1</sup> These are, of course, but vain things which the heathen imagine (and some of us have an ideal of socialism very different from the godlessness which has usurped the noble name), but they serve to illustrate what clever men, who have thrown off all belief in God, will bring themselves to hope for : a society utterly Babylonian, without pity or patience,—if it were possible for these eternal graces to die out of any human community,—subject to the opinion of pedants, whose tender mercies would be far more fatal to the weak and poor than the present indifference of the rich ; seriously fettering liberty of conscience <sup>2</sup> and destitute of chivalry. It may be that our Positivist critics are right, and that the interests of humanity have suffered in Christian times from the prevalence of too selfish and introspective a religion ; but whether

<sup>1</sup> Bax, *Religion of Socialism*.

<sup>2</sup> This at least has been realised by the Soviet regime in Russia.

our religion has looked too intensely inward or not, we cannot, it is certain, do without a religion that looks steadily up, owning the discipline of Divine Law and the Example of an Infinite Mercy and Longsuffering.

But, though we had never heard of Positivism or of the Socialism which denies God, our age, with its popular and public habits, would still require this example of Service, which our prophecy enforces: it is an age so charged with the instincts of work, with the ambition to be useful, with the fashion of altruism; but so empty of the sense of God, of reverence, discipline, and prayer. We do not need to learn philanthropy,—the thing is in the air; but we do need to be taught that philanthropy demands a theology both for its purity and its effectiveness. When philanthropy has become, what it is so much to-day, the contest of rival politicians, the ambition of every demagogue, the fitful self-indulgence of weak hearts, the opportunity of vain theorists, and for all a temptation to work with lawless means for selfish ends,—it is time to remember that the Service of Man is first of all a great Service for God. This faith alone can keep us from the wilfulness, the crotchets, and the insubordination, which spoil so many well-intentioned to their kind, and so woefully break up the ranks of progress. Humility is the first need of the philanthropist of to-day: humility, discipline, and the sense of proportion; and these are qualities, which only faith in God and the conscience of law are known to bestow upon the human heart. It is the fear of God that will best preserve us from making our philanthropy the mere flattery of the popular appetite. To keep us utterly patient with men we need to think of God's patience with ourselves. While to us all there come calls to sacrifice, which our fellow-men may so little deserve from us, and against which our self-

culture can plead so many reasons, that unless God's will and example were before us, the calls would never be obeyed. In short, to be most useful in this life it is necessary to feel that we are used. Look at Christ. To Him philanthropy was no mere habit and spontaneous affection; even for that great heart the love of man had to be enforced by the compulsion of the will of God. The busy days of healing and teaching had between them long nights of lonely prayer; and the Son of God did not pass to His supreme self-sacrifice for men till after the struggle with, and the submission to, His Father's will in Gethsemane.

## II. THE SUBSTANCE OF SERVICE

The substance of the Servant's work is stated in one word, uttered thrice in emphatic positions. *The Law shall he bear forth to the nations. . . . In troth shall he bear forth the Law. . . . He shall not flicker nor be crushed, till he set on the earth*<sup>1</sup> *The Law.*

The English version's word *judgement* is a natural but misleading translation of the original, and we must dismiss at once the idea of judicial sentence, which it suggests. The Hebrew is 'mishpat,' which means, among other things, either a single statute, or the complete body of law which God gave Israel by Moses, at once their creed and their code; or, perhaps, also the abstract quality of justice or right. We rendered it as the latter in Isa. i-xxxix. But, as will be seen from the note below,<sup>2</sup> when used in Isa. xl-lxvi without the

<sup>1</sup> This time 'arets' with the article. So not the *land* of Judah only but the world.

<sup>2</sup> The following are the four main meanings of mishpat in Isa. xl-lxvi: (1) In a general sense, a legal process, xli. 1, *let us come together to the judgement*, or *the law* (with the article), cf. l. 8, *man of my judgement*, i.e., my fellow-at-law, my adversary; liii. 8, *oppression and judgement*, i.e.,

article, as here, it is the 'mishpat' of *Yahweh*,—not so much the actual body of statutes given to Israel, as the principles of *right* and religion which they enforce. In one passage it is given in parallel to the civic virtues *righteousness, truth, uprightness*, but—as its etymology compared with theirs shows us—it is these viewed not in their character as virtues, but in their obligation as ordained by God. Hence, *duty* to *Yahweh* as inseparable from His religion (Ewald), *religion* as the law of life (Delitzsch), *the law* (Cheyne, who admirably compares the Arabic *ed-Dîn*) are all good renderings. Professor Davidson gives the fullest exposition. 'It can scarcely,' he says, 'be rendered "religion" in the modern sense, it is the equity and civil right which is the result of the true religion of Jehovah; and though comprehended under religion in the Old Testament sense, is rather, according to our conceptions, religion applied in civil life. Of old the religious unit was the state, and the life of the state was the expression of its religion. Morality was law or custom, and both reposed upon God. A condition of thought such as now prevails, where morality is based on independent grounds,

a judgement which was oppressive, a legal injustice. (2) A person's *cause* or *right*, xl. 27, xlix. 4. (3) *Ordinance* instituted by *Yahweh* for the life and worship of His people, lviii. 2, *ordinances* of righteousness, *i.e.*, either canonical *laws*, or ordinances by observing which the people would make themselves righteous. (4) In general, the sum of the laws given by *Yahweh* to Israel, *the Law*, lviii. 2, *Law* of their God; li. 4, *Yahweh* says *My Law* (Rev. Ver. *judgement*), parallel to 'Torah' or Revelation (Rev. Ver. *law*). Then absolutely, without the article or *Yahweh's* name attached, xlii. 1, 3, 4. In lvi. 1 parallel to righteousness; lix. 14 parallel to righteousness, truth, and uprightness. In fact, in this last use, while represented as equivalent to civic morality, it is this, not as viewed in its character, *right, upright*, but in its obligation as ordained by God: *morality as His Law*. The absence of the article may either mean what it means in the case of *people* and *land*, *i.e.*, the *Law*, too much of a proper name to need the article, or it may be an attempt to abstract the quality of the *Law*; and if so, *mishpat* is equal to *justice*. But like the Arabic *dîn*, *religion* is perhaps the best equivalent.

whether natural law or the principles inherent in the mind apart from religion, did not then exist. What the prophet means by "bringing forth right" is explained in another passage, where it is said that Jehovah's "arms shall judge the peoples," and that the "isles shall wait for His arm" (chap. li. 5). "Judgement" is that pervading of life by the principles of equity and humanity which is the immediate effect of the true religion of Jehovah.' <sup>1</sup> In short, 'mishpat' is not only the civic righteousness and justice, to which it is made parallel in our prophecy, but it is these with God behind them. On the one hand it is conterminous with national virtue, on the other it is the ordinance and will of God.

This, then, is the burden of the Servant's work, to pervade and instruct every nation's life on earth with the righteousness and piety that are ordained of God. *He shall not flicker nor be crushed, till he have set in the earth Law*,—till in every nation justice, humanity, and worship are established as the law of God. We have seen that the Servant is in this passage still some aspect or shape of the people,—the people who are not a people, but scattered among the brickfields and markets of Babylonia, a horde of captives. When we keep that in mind, two or three things come home to us about this task of theirs. First, it is no mere effort at proselytism. It is not an ambition to Judaise the world. The national consciousness and provincial habits, which cling about so many of the prophecies of Israel's relation to the world, have dropped from this one, and the nation's mission is identified with the establishment of law, the diffusion of light, the relief of suffering. *I will give thee for a light to the nations: to open blind eyes, to bring out from durance the captive,*

<sup>1</sup> *Expositor*, second series, vol. viii, p. 364.



*from the prison the dwellers in darkness.*<sup>1</sup> Again, it is no mere office of preaching, to which the Servant's commission is limited, no mere inculcation of articles of belief. But we have here the same rich, broad idea of religion, identifying it with the whole national life, which we found so often illustrated by Isaiah, and which is one of the beneficial results to religion of God's choice for Himself of a nation as a whole.<sup>2</sup> What such a Service has to give the world, is not merely testimony to the truth, nor fresh views of it, nor artistic methods of teaching it; but social life under its obligation, the public conscience of it, the long tradition and habit of it, the breed—what the prophets call the *seed*—of it. To establish true religion as the constitution, national duty, and regular practice of every people under the sun, in all the details of order, cleanliness, justice, purity, and mercy, in which it had been applied to themselves,—such was the Service and the Destiny of Israel. And the marvel of so universal and political an ideal was, that it came not to a people in the front ranks of civilisation or of empire, but to a people who at the time had not even a political shape for themselves,—a mere herd of captives, despised and rejected of men. When we realise this, we understand that they never would have dared to think of it, or to speak of it to one another, unless they had believed it to be the purpose and will of Almighty God for them; unless they had recognised it, not only as a service desirable and true in itself, and needed also by humanity, but withal as His '*mishpat*,' His *judgement* or *law*, who by His bare word can bring all things to pass. But before we see

<sup>1</sup> This might, of course, only mean what the Servant had to do for his captive countrymen. But coming as it does after the *light of nations*, it seems natural to take it in its wider and more spiritual sense.

<sup>2</sup> See ch. xv of this volume.



how strongly He impressed them with this, that His creative force was in their mission, let us turn to the methods by which He commanded them to achieve it, —methods corresponding to its purely spiritual and universal character.

### III. THE TEMPER OF SERVICE

1. *He shall not cry, nor lift up,  
Nor make his voice heard in the street.*

Nothing is more characteristic of our prophecy than its belief in the power of speech, its exultation in singing, and the spell of the human voice. It opens with a chorus of high calls: none are so lovely to it as heralds, or so musical as watchmen when they lift up the voice; it sets the preaching of glad tidings before the people as their national ideal; eloquence it describes as a sharp sword leaping from God's scabbard. The Servant of the Lord is trained in style of speech; his words are as pointed arrows; he has the mouth of the learned, a voice to command obedience. The prophet's own tones are superb: nowhere else does the short sententiousness of Hebrew roll out in such sonorous lines. He uses speech in every style: for comfort, for bitter controversy, in clear proclamation, in deep-throated denunciation: *Call with the throat, spare not, lift up the voice like a trumpet.* His constant key-notes are, *speaking a word, lift up the voice with strength, sing, publish, declare.* In fact, there is no use to which the human voice has ever been put in the Service of Man, for comfort, or for justice, or for liberty, for the diffusion of knowledge or for the scattering of music, which our prophet does not enlist and urge upon his people.

When, then, he says of the Servant that *he shall not*

*cry, nor lift up, nor make his voice to be heard in the street*, he cannot be referring to the means and art of the Service, but rather to the tone and character of the Servant. Each of the triplet of verbs he uses shows us this. The first one, translated *cry*, is not the cry or call of the herald voice in chap. xl, the high, clear Kāra ; it is ṣa'aḳ, a sharper word with a choke in the centre of it meaning *to scream*, especially under excitement. Then *to lift up* is the exact equivalent of our 'to be loud.' And if we were seeking to translate into Hebrew our phrase 'to advertise oneself,' we could not find a closer expression for it than to *make his voice be heard in the street*. To be 'screamy,' to be 'loud,' to 'advertise oneself,'—these modern expressions for vices that were ancient as well as modern render the exact force of the verse. Such the Servant of God will not be nor do. He is at once too strong, too meek and too practical. That God is with him, *holding him fast*, keeps him calm and unhysterical ; that he is but God's instrument keeps him humble and quiet ; and that his heart is in his work keeps him from advertising himself at its expense. It is perhaps especially for the last of these reasons that Matthew (in his twelfth chapter) quotes this passage of our Lord. Jesus had been disturbed in His labours of healing by the disputatious Pharisees. He had answered them, and then withdrawn from their neighbourhood. Many sick were brought after Him to His privacy, and He healed them all. But *He charged them that they should not make Him known ; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Behold, My Servant . . . he shall not strive, nor cry aloud, neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets*. Now this cannot be, what some carelessly take it for, an example against controversy or debate of all kinds,

for Jesus Himself had just been debating ; nor be meant as an absolute forbidding of all publishing of good works, for Christ has shown us, on other occasions, that such publication is good. The difficulty is explained by what we have seen to explain other perplexing actions of our Lord, His intensely practical spirit. The work to be done determined everything. When it made argument necessary, as that same day it had done in the synagogue, then our Lord entered on argument : He did not only heal the man with the withered hand, but He made him the text of a sermon. But when talking about His work hindered it, provoked the Pharisees to come near with their questions, and took up His time and strength in disputes with them, then for the work's sake He forbade talk about it. We have no trace of evidence that Christ forbade this publication also for His own sake,—as a temptation to Himself and fraught with evil effects upon His feelings. We know that it is for this reason we have to shun it. Even though we are quite guiltless of contributing to such publication ourselves and it is the work of generous and well-meaning friends, it still becomes a danger to us. For it is apt to fever us and exhaust our nervous force, even when it does not turn out heads with its praise, to distract us and to draw us more and more into the enervating habit of paying attention to popular opinion. Therefore, as a man values his efficiency in the Service of Man, he will not *make himself to be heard in the street*. There is an amount of *making to be heard* which is absolutely necessary for the work's sake ; but there is also an amount which can be indulged in only at the work's expense. Some present philanthropy, even with the best intentions, suffers from this over-publicity, and its besetting sins are ' loudness ' and hysteria.

What, then, shall tell us how far we can go? What shall teach us how to be eloquent without screaming, clear without being loud, impressive without wasting our strength in seeking to make an impression? These questions bring us back to what we started with, as the indispensable requisite for Service—some guiding and religious principles behind even the kindest and steadiest tempers. For many things in the Service of Man no exact rules will avail; neither logic nor by-laws of administration can teach us to observe the uncertain and constantly varying degree of duty, which they demand. Tact for that is bestowed only by the influence of lofty principles working from above. This is a case in point. What rules of logic or ‘directions of the superior authority’ can, in the Service of Man, distinguish for us between excitement and earnestness, bluster and eloquence, energy and mere self-advertisement; on whose subtle differences the whole success of the service must turn. Only the discipline of faith, only the sense of God, can help us here. The practical temper by itself will not help us. To be busy but gives us too great self-importance; and hard work often serves only to bring out the combative instincts. To know that we are His Servants shall keep us meek; that we are held fast by His hand shall keep us calm; that His great laws are not abrogated shall keep us sane. When for our lowliest and most commonplace kinds of service we think no religion is required, let us remember the solemn introduction of the evangelist to his story of the foot-washing. *Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came forth from God and goeth unto God, riseth from supper, and layeth aside His garments; and He took a towel, and girded Himself; then*

*He poureth water into the bason, and began to wash His disciples' feet.*

2. But to meekness and discipline the Servant adds gentleness.

*Reed that is crushed he breaks not off,  
Wick that is flickering he does not quench ;  
Faithfully bears he forth the Law.*

The force of the last of these three lines is, of course, qualificative and conditional. It is set as a guard against the abuse of the first two, and means that though the Servant in dealing with men is to be solicitous about their weakness, yet the interests of religion shall in no way suffer. Mercy shall be practised, but so that truth is not compromised.

The original application of the verse is thus finely stated by Professor Davidson : ' This is the singularly humane and compassionate view the Prophet takes of the Gentiles,—they are bruised reeds and expiring flames. . . . What the prophet may refer to is the human virtues, expiring among the nations, but not yet dead ; the sense of God, debased by idolatries, but not extinct ; the consciousness in the individual soul of its own worth and its capacities, and the glimmering ideal of a true life and a worthy activity almost crushed out by the grinding tyranny of rulers and the miseries entailed by their ambitions—this flickering light the Servant shall feed and blow into a flame.<sup>1</sup> . . . It is the future relation of the *people* Israel to other peoples that he describes. The thought which has now taken possession of statesmen of the higher class, that the point of contact between nation and nation need

<sup>1</sup> *Expositor*, second series, viii, pp. 364, 365, 366.



not be the sword, that the advantage of one people is not the loss of another but the gain of mankind, that the land where freedom has grown to maturity and is worshipped in her virgin serenity and loveliness should nurse the new-born babe in other homes, and that the strange powers of the mind of man and the subtle activities of his hand should not be repressed but fostered in every people, in order that the product may be poured into the general lap of the race—this idea is supposed to be due to Christianity. And, immediately, it is ; but it is older than Christianity. It is found in this Prophet. And it is not new in him, for a Prophet, presumably a century and a half his senior, had said : *The remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples as a dew from the Lord, as showers upon the grass* (Micah v. 7).<sup>1</sup>

But while this national reference may be the one originally meant, the splendid vagueness of the metaphor forbids us to be content with it, or with any solitary application. For the two clauses are as the eyes of the All-Pitiful Father, that rest wherever on this broad earth there is any life, though it be so low as to be conscious only through pain or doubt ; they are as the healing palms of Jesus stretched over the multitudes to bless and gather to Himself the weary and the poor in spirit. We contrast our miserable ruin of character, our feeble sparks of desire after holiness, with the life, which Christ demands and has promised, and in despair we tell ourselves, this can never become that. But it is precisely this which Christ has come to lift to that. The first chapter of the Sermon on the Mount closes with the awful command, *Be ye perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect ;* but we work our way

<sup>1</sup> *Expositor*, second series, viii, p. 366.



back through the chapter, and we come to this, *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled*; and to this, *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*. Such is Christ's treatment of the *bruised reed* and the *flickering wick*. Let us not despair. There is only one kind of men, for whom it has no gospel,—the dead and they who are steeped in worldliness, who have forgotten what the pain of a sore conscience is, and are strangers to humility and aspiration. But for all who know their life, were it only through their pain or their doubt, were it only in the despair of what they feel to be a last struggle with temptation, were it only in contrition for their sin or in shame for their uselessness, this text has hope. *Reed that is crushed he breaketh not off, flickering wick he doth not quench*.

This objective sense of the Servant's temper must always be the first for us to understand. For more than he was, we are, mortal, ready ourselves to *break and to fade*. But having experienced the grace, let us show the same in our service to others. Let us understand that we are sent forth like the great Servant of God, that man *may have life, and have it more abundantly*. We need resolutely and with pious obstinacy to set this temper before us, for it is not natural to our hearts. Even the best of us, in the excitement of our work, forget to think of anything except of making our mark, or of getting the better of what we are at work upon. When work grows hard, the combative instincts waken within us, till we look upon the characters God has given us to mould as enemies to be fought. We are passionate to convince men, to overcome them with an argument, to wring the confession from them that we are right and they wrong. Now Christ our Master must have seen in every man He met a very

great deal more to be fought and extirpated than we can possibly see in one another. Yet He largely left that alone, and addressed Himself rather to the sparks of nobility He found, and fostered these to a strong life, which from within overcame the badness of the man,—the badness which opposition from the outside would but have beaten into harder obduracy. We must ever remember that we are not warriors but artists,—artists after the fashion of Jesus Christ, who came not to condemn life because it was imperfect, but to build life up to the image of God. So He sends us to be artists; as it is written, *He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some pastors and teachers.* For what end? For convincing men, for telling them what fools they mostly are, for crushing them in the inquisition of their own conscience, for getting the better of them in argument?—no, not for these combative purposes at all, but for fostering and artistic ones: *for the perfecting of the saints, for the building up of the body of Christ; till we all come unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.*

He who, in his Service of Man, practises such a temper towards the breaking and the fading, shall never himself break or fade, as this prophecy implies when it uses the same verbs in verses *three* and *four*. For he who is loyal to life shall find life generous to him; he who is careful of weakness shall never want for strength.

#### IV. THE POWER BEHIND SERVICE

There only remains now to emphasise the power that is behind Service. It is, say verses *five* and *six*, the Creative Power of God.

*Thus saith Yahweh The God,  
Who spread the heavens, and stretched them forth,  
Creator of earth and her produce,  
Giver of breath to the people upon her,  
And of spirit to them that walk therein,  
I Yahweh, have called thee in righteousness,  
And taken hold of thy hand.*

Majestic confirmation of the call to Service ! based upon the fundamental granite of this whole prophecy, which here crops out into a noble peak, firm station for the Servant, and point for prospect of all the future. Our easy fault is to read these words of the Creator as the utterance of mere ceremonial commonplace, blast of trumpets at the going forth of a hero, scenery for his stage, the pomp of nature summoned to assist at the presentation of God's elect before the world. Yet not for splendour were they spoken, but for bare faith's sake. God's Servant has been sent forth, weak and gentle, with quiet methods and to very slow effects. *He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor make his voice to be heard in the streets.* What chance has such, our service, in the ways of the world, where to be forceful and selfish, to bluster and battle, is to survive and overcome ! So we speak, and the panic ambition rises to fight the world with its own weapons, and to employ the kinds of debate, advertisement and competition by which the world goes forward. For this, the Creator calls to us, and marshals His powers before our eyes. We thought there were but two things,—our own silence and the world's noise. There are three, and the world's noise is only an interruption between the other two. Across it deep calleth unto deep ; the immeasurable processes of creation cry to the feeble convictions of truth in our hearts, We are one. Creation is the certi-

ificate that no moral effort is a forlorn hope. When God, after repeating His results in creation, adds, I have called thee in *righteousness*, He means some consistency between His processes in creation, rational and immense as they are, and those poor efforts He calls on our weakness to make, which look foolish in face of the world. Behind every moral effort there is, He says, Creative force. Right and Might are ultimately one. Paul sums up the force of the passage, when, after speaking of the success of his ministry, he gives as its reason that the God of Creation and of Grace are the same. *Therefore seeing we have received this ministry we faint not. For God, who hath commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

The spiritual Service of Man, then, has creative forces behind it; work for God upon the hearts and characters of others has creative force behind it. And nature is the seal and the sacrament of this. Let our souls, therefore, dilate with her prospects. Let our impatience study her reasonableness and her laws. Let our weak wills feel the rush of her tides. For the power that is in her, and the faithful pursuance of purposes to their ends, are the power and the character that work behind each witness of our conscience, each effort of our heart for others. Not less strong than she, not less calm, not less certain of success, shall prove the moral Service of Man

## CHAPTER XIX

### PROPHET AND MARTYR

ISAIAH XLIX. 1-9; L. 4-11

THE second great passage upon the Servant of the Lord is chap. xlix. 1-9, and the third is chap. l. 4-11. In both of these the servant himself speaks; in both he speaks as prophet; while in the second he tells us that his prophecy leads him on to martyrdom. The two passages may, therefore, be taken together.

Before we examine their contents, let us look for a moment at the way in which they are woven into the rest of the text. As we have seen, chap. xlix begins a new section of the prophecy, in so far that with it the prophet leaves Babylon and Cyrus behind him, and ceases to speak of the contrast between God and the idols. But, still, chap. xlix is linked to chap. xlviii. In leading up to its climax,—the summons to Israel to depart from Babylon,—chap. xlviii does not forget that Israel is delivered from Babylon in order to be the Servant of the Lord: *say ye, Yahweh hath redeemed His Servant Jacob*. It is this service, which chap. xlix carries forward from the opportunity, and the call to go forth from Babylon, with which chap. xlviii closes. That opportunity, though real, does not at all mean that Israel's redemption is complete. There were many moral reasons which prevented the whole nation from taking full advantage of the political freedom

offered them by Cyrus. Although the true Israel, that part of the nation which has the conscience of service, has shaken itself free from the temptation as well as from the tyranny of Babel, and now sees the world before it as the theatre of its operations,—ver. 1, *Hearken, ye isles, unto Me ; and listen, ye peoples, from far*,—it has still, before it can address itself to that universal mission, to exhort, rouse, and extricate the rest of its nation, *saying to the bounden, Go forth ; and to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves* (ver. 9). Chap. xlix, therefore, is the natural development of chap. xlvi. There is certainly a little interval of time implied between the two—the time during which it became apparent that the opportunity to leave Babylon would not be taken advantage of by all Israel, and that the nation's redemption must be a moral as well as a political one. But chap. xlix. 1–9 comes out of chaps. xl–xlvi, and it is impossible to believe that in it we are not still under the influence of the same author.

A similar coherence is apparent if we look to the other end of chap. xlix. 1–9. Here it is evident that the commission to the Servant concludes with ver. 9a ; but then its closing words, *Say to the bound, Go forth ; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves*, start fresh thoughts about the redeemed on their way back (vv. 9b–13) ; and these thoughts naturally lead on to a picture of Jerusalem imagining herself forsaken, and amazed by the appearance of so many of her children before her (vv. 14–21). Promises to her and to them follow in due sequence down to chap. l. 3, when the Servant resumes his soliloquy about himself, but abruptly, and in no apparent connection with what immediately precedes. His soliloquy ceases in ver. 9, and another voice, probably that of God Himself, urges



obedience to the Servant (ver. 10), and judgement to the sinners in Israel (ver. 11) ; and chap. li is an address to the spiritual Israel, and to Jerusalem, with thoughts much the same as those uttered in xlix. 14-1. 3.

In face of these facts, and taking into consideration the dramatic form in which the whole prophecy is cast, we find ourselves unable to say that there is anything which is incompatible with a single authorship, or which makes it impossible for the two passages on the Servant to have originally sprung, each at the place at which it now stands, from the progress of the prophet's thoughts.

Babylon is left behind, and the way of the Lord prepared in the desert. Israel have once more the title-deeds to their own land, and Sion looms in sight. Yet with their face to home, and their heart upon freedom, the voice of this people, or at least of the better part, rises first upon the conscience of their duty to the rest of mankind. The measure of vv. 1-6 is the same as in the previous Servant-Song, xlii. 1-4, but is double the length, six instead of three quatrains. In order to reduce them to a proper sequence and progress of meaning Duhm, Cheyne, Box, and Moffatt transfer the last couplet of ver. 5 to immediately after ver. 3 ; but I agree with Marti that it is hard to see why this is necessary. The meaning runs duly throughout as the quatrains stand in the text.

xlix. 1. *Hearken O isles to me,  
And listen ye peoples from far !  
Yahweh from birth hath called me,  
From the womb of my mother made signal my  
name.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In Heb. this line is full of the letter *m*.

2. *My mouth He hath set like a whetted sword,  
In the shadow of His hand He hid me,  
Myself hath He made to a polished arrow,  
And laid me up in His quiver,*
3. *And hath told me, My Servant art thou,  
Israel,<sup>1</sup> through whom I am glorified.*
4. *But I, I said : In vain have I toiled,  
For waste and wind <sup>2</sup> my strength have I spent.*

*Yet surely my right is with Yahweh,  
And the meed of my work with my God.*

5. *And now hath Yahweh said thus,<sup>3</sup>  
Who formed me from birth for His Servant,*

*To turn to Him Jacob again,  
And that Israel be not swept off.<sup>4</sup>  
So honoured am I in the eyes of Yahweh,  
And my God has become my strength.*

6. *' 'Tis too little,' He said,<sup>5</sup> 'to raise Jacob's tribes.  
And the rescued of Israel restore ;  
So I set thee a light for the nations,  
To be my salvation to the end of the earth.'*

Other seven quatrains follow vv. 7-12, but in lines less regular than those of vv. 1-6. To begin with they are addressed by Yahweh to His Servant.

<sup>1</sup> Some elide *Israel* as a gloss ; perhaps unnecessarily.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *kebhel* : *breath* or *bubble*.

<sup>3</sup> So LXX, Syr., and some Hebrew MSS.

<sup>4</sup> So, reading the negative *lo'*, the Heb. text followed by Duhm, Skinner, Box. But some Heb. and LXX MSS. read *lô* = *to Him*, and render the verb not *be swept off*, but *swept or gathered to*. So R.V., margin of A.V., Cheyne, and Moffatt. Marti reads *I will gather Israel*.

<sup>5</sup> LXX and Vulg. add *to Me*. Heb. adds *thy being My Servant* ; at once a most awkward construction, irrelevant just here, and disturbing to the metre ; therefore reasonably taken by most moderns as a gloss.

xlix. 7. *Thus sayeth Yahweh,  
Israel's Redeemer, his Holy,  
To a heartily despised,<sup>1</sup> an abhorred of the people,  
A servant of tyrants.*

*Kings shall stare <sup>2</sup> and start up,  
Princes, and do to him <sup>3</sup> homage,  
For the sake of Yahweh, the Faithful,  
Israel's Holy, Who chose thee.*

8. *Thus sayeth Yahweh,  
In a time of grace I have answered thee,  
In a day of salvation have helped thee,  
To form and set thee a covenant of the people (?) <sup>4</sup>*

*To raise up the land, to restore  
Heirs to the forlorn heirdoms,*

9. *Saying to the bound, Go forth.  
To those who are in darkness, Appear.*

Of vv. 1-6 above, Professor Davidson has said :—  
' Who is so blind as not to perceive that the consciousness of the Servant here is only a mirror in which the history of Israel is reflected—first, in its original call and design that Jehovah should be glorified in it ; second, in the long delay and apparent failure of the design ; and, thirdly, as the design is now in the present juncture of circumstances and concurrence of events about

<sup>1</sup> Budde would read *despised of man*.

<sup>2</sup> LXX at *him*, or *it*, i.e., Israel's deliverance.

<sup>3</sup> So LXX once more. Cheyne and Moffatt read *thee* conformably to *thee*, two lines further on.

<sup>4</sup> Or *covenant-people (?)*. Duhm, Marti, Box take this line as a later intrusion copied from xlii. 6. Cheyne and Whitehouse retain it as original ; I think rightly.

to be realised ? ' <sup>1</sup> Yes : but it is Israel's calling, native insufficiency, and present duty, as owned by only a part of the people, which, though named by the national name (ver. 3), feels itself standing over against the bulk of the nation, whose redemption it is called to work out (vv. 8 and 9) before it takes up its world-wide service. We have already sufficiently discussed this distinction of the Servant from the whole nation, as well as the distinction of the moral work he has to effect in Israel's redemption from Babylon, from the political enfranchisement of the nation, which is the work of Cyrus. Let us, then, at once address ourselves to the main features of his consciousness of his mission to mankind. We shall find these features to be three. The Servant owns for his chief end the glory of God ; and he feels that he has to glorify God in two ways —by Speech, and by Suffering.

## I. THE SERVANT GLORIFIES GOD

*He said to me, My servant art thou,  
Israel, in whom I shall make Myself glorious.*

The Hebrew verb, which the Authorised Version translates *will be glorified*, means to *burst forth, become visible*, break like the dawn into splendour, and is in the reflexive form. This is the scriptural sense of Glory. Glory is God become visible. As we put it in Volume I, <sup>2</sup> glory is the expression of holiness, as beauty is the expression of health. But, in order to become visible, the Absolute and Holy God needs mortal man. We have felt something like a paradox in these

<sup>1</sup> *Expositor*, second series, viii, 441.

<sup>2</sup> P. 67.

prophecies. Nowhere else is God lifted up so absolute, and so able to effect all by His mere will and word; yet nowhere else is a human agency and service so strongly asserted as indispensable to the Divine purpose. But this is no more a paradox, than the fact that physical light needs some material through which to become visible. And so, to *break into glory*, God requires something outside Himself. A responsive portion of humanity is indispensable to Him,—a people who will reflect Him and spend itself for Him. Man is the mirror and the wick of the Divine. God is glorified in man's character and witness,—these are His mirror; and in man's sacrifice,—that is His wick.

And so we meet again the central truth of our prophecy, that in order to serve men it is necessary first to be used of God. We must place ourselves at the disposal of the Divine, we must let God shine on us and kindle us, and break into glory through us, before we can hope either to comfort mankind or to set them on fire. It is true that ideas very different from this prevail among the ranks of the servants of humanity in our day. A large part of our most serious literature professes for 'its main bearing this conclusion, that the fellowship between man and man, which has been the principle of development, social and moral, is not dependent upon conceptions of what is not man, and that the idea of God, so far as it has been a high spiritual influence, is the ideal of a goodness entirely human.'<sup>1</sup> But such theories are possible only so long as the still unexhausted influence of religion upon society continues to supply human nature, directly or indirectly, with

<sup>1</sup>So George Eliot wrote of her own writings shortly before her death. See *Life*, iii. 245.

a virtue which may be plausibly claimed for human nature's own original product. Let religion be entirely withdrawn, and the question, Whence comes virtue? may be answered by virtue ceasing to come at all. The savage imagines that it is the burning-glass which sets the bush on fire, and as long as the sun is shining it may be impossible to convince him that he is wrong; but a dull day will teach even his mind that the glass can do nothing without the sun upon it. And so, though men may talk glibly against God, while society still shines in the light of His countenance, yet, if they and society resolutely withdraw themselves from that light, they shall lose every heat and lustre of the spirit which is indispensable for social service.<sup>1</sup> On this the ancient Greek was at one with the ancient Hebrew. *Enthusiasm* is just *God breaking into glory* through a human life. Here lies the secret of the buoyancy and 'freshness of the earlier world,' whether pagan or Hebrew, and by this may be understood the depression and pessimism which infects modern society. They had God in their blood, and we are anæmic. *But I, I said, I have laboured in vain; for waste and for wind have I spent my strength.* We must all say that, if our last word is *our strength*. But let this not be our last word. Let us remember the sufficient answer: *Surely my right is with the Lord, and the meed of my work with my God.* We are set, not in our own strength or for our own advantage, but with the hand of God upon us, and that the Divine life may *break into glory* through our life. Carlyle said, and it was almost his last testimony, 'The older I grow, and I am now on the brink of eternity, the more comes back to me the

<sup>1</sup> Lady Ponsonby, to whom George Eliot wrote the letter quoted above, confessed that, with the disappearance of religious faith from her soul, there vanished also the power of interest in, and of pity for, her kind.



first sentence of the catechism, which I learned when a child, and the fuller does its meaning grow—"What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever."

It was said above, that, as light breaks to visibleness either from a mirror or a wick, so God *breaks to glory* either from the witness of men—that is His mirror,—or from their sacrifice—that is His wick. Of both of these ways of glorifying God is the Servant conscious. His service is Speech and Sacrifice, Prophecy and Martyrdom.

## II. THE SERVANT AS PROPHET

Of his service of Speech the Servant speaks in two passages—xlix. 2, four lines of the second of the Servant-Songs which we have already studied, and l. 4, 5, the first lines of the third of these Songs, lines of uncertain text but of obvious meaning, and in a metre which, in spite of the textual difficulties, appears distinctly as the *Kinah*<sup>1</sup> or elegiac; and in this differs from the two previous Songs on the Servant. In both passages the Servant himself is the speaker.

xlix. 2. *My mouth He hath set like a whetted sword,  
In the shadow of His hand hath He hid me.  
He hath made me a polished arrow,  
And laid me up in His quiver.*

l. 4. *Yahweh my Lord hath given me,  
The tongue of the taught; <sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> See Budde, *Z.A.T.W.*, 1891, p. 238.

<sup>2</sup> Or *learned*, or *disciples*, or *docile*.

*To know how to answer (?) <sup>1</sup> the weary,  
With a word that is . . . (?) <sup>2</sup>*

*Morning by morning He openeth mine ear,  
To hear as the taught,  
And I, I have not been rebellious  
Nor turned away backwards.*

At the bidding of our own latest prophet we became suspicious of the power of speech, and the goddess of eloquence walked, as it were, under surveillance among us. Carlyle reiterated, 'All speech and rumour is short-lived, foolish, untrue. Silence is our fundamental talent. The dumb nations are the builders of the world.' Thus many grew intolerant of words and the ideal man tended to become the doer rather than the prophet. Yet, as some one said, Carlyle dissatisfies us with preaching only by preaching himself; and we have but to read him to discover that his disgust with human speech is consistent with reverence for the voice as an instrument of service to humanity. 'The tongue of man,' he says, 'is a sacred organ. Man

<sup>1</sup> Quite uncertain. The text gives a verb not elsewhere found, nor recognisable as authentic Hebrew; though on the strength of renderings in Targ., Vulg. and Aquila it has been understood as *to sustain* (so R.V. and Skinner). By change of one or more consonants some read *to answer*, as queried above (Grätz, Box), some *to revive* (Ewald, Cheyne) or *feed* (Klostermann). The reading of A.V. *to speak in season* is due to the words *עַל קַיְפֹה* of LXXA, cf. xlix. 2.

<sup>2</sup> As they stand in the text, either this line or the preceding is defective. Duhm seems to feel the defect in the preceding; Cheyne in this one, which is more probable, and he suggests the addition to *a word* of a qualifying term, e.g., *נְחָמָה* = *of comfort*. But one is tempted to seek the qualifying term rather among the letters of the tautologous words which follow in the text and are now usually taken as a gloss, *עֵיר בְּקֶר*, and to read *דְּבַר יֵעֵר* = *a word that will be pleasing or gentle*. All the conjectures, however, are unsatisfying. With most moderns I have omitted the tautology in what remains, yet this, too, is questionable

himself is definable in philosophy as an "Incarnate Word"; the Word not there, you have no man there either, but a Phantasm instead.'

One thing is certain,—that Speech has not the monopoly of falsehood or of other presumptuous sin. Silence may not only mean ignorance,—by some supposed to be the heaviest sin of which Silence can be guilty,—but many things far worse than ignorance, like unreadiness, cowardice, falsehood, treason, and base consent to what is evil. No man can look back on his past, however lowly or limited his sphere may have been, and fail to see that not once or twice his supreme duty was a word, and his guilt was not to have spoken it. We all have known the pain of being straitened in prayer or praise; the shame of being, through our cowardice to bear witness, traitors to truth; the shame of being too timid to say No to the tempter, and speak out the brave reasons of which the heart was full; the shame of finding ourselves incapable of uttering the word that would have kept a soul from taking a wrong turning in life; the shame, when truth, clearness, and authority were required from us, of being able only to stammer or mince or rant. To have been dumb before the ignorant or the dying, before a questioning child or before the tempter,—this, too frequent an experience of our common life, is enough to justify Carlyle when he said, 'If the Word is not there, you have no man there either, but a Phantasm instead.'

When we look within ourselves we see the reason. We perceive that the one fact, which amid the mystery and chaos of our inner life gives certainty and light, is a fact which is a Voice. Our nature may be wrecked and dissipated, but conscience is left; or in ignorance and gloom, but conscience is audible; or with all the

faculties strong and assertive, yet conscience is unquestionably queen,—and conscience is a Voice. A still, small voice, which is the surest thing in man, and the noblest ; which makes all the difference in his life ; which lies at the back of his character and conduct. And the most indispensable, and the grandest service, therefore, which a man can do his fellow-men, is to get down to this voice, and make himself its mouthpiece and its prophet. What work is possible till the word be spoken ? Did ever order come to social life before was first uttered the command, in which men felt the articulation and enforcement of the ultimate voice within themselves ? Discipline and instruction and energy have not appeared without speech going before them. Knowledge, faith, and hope do not dawn of themselves ; they travel, as light came forth in the beginning, upon the pulses of the speaking breath.

It was the greatness of Israel to be conscious of their call as a nation to this fundamental service of humanity. Believing in the Word of God as the original source of all things,—*In the beginning God said, Let there be light ; and there was light*,—they had the conscience that, as it had been in the physical world, so must it be in the moral. Men were to be served and their lives to be moulded by the Word. God was to be glorified by letting His Word break through the life and the lips of men. There was in the Old Testament, it is true, a triple ideal of manhood: *prophet, priest, and king*. But the greatest of these was the prophet, for king and priest had to be prophets too. Eloquence was a royal virtue,—with persuasion, the power of command and swift judgement. Among the seven spirits of the Lord which Isaiah sees descending on the King-to-Come is the spirit of counsel, and he afterwards adds of the King: *He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth*,

*and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.* Similarly, the priests had at first been the ministers, not so much of sacrifice, as of the revealed Word of God. And now the new ideal of priesthood, the laying down of one's life a sacrifice for God and for the people, was not the mere imitation of the animal victim required by the priestly law, but was the natural development of the prophetic experience. It was (as we shall presently see) the prophet, who, in his inevitable sufferings on behalf of the truth he uttered, developed that consciousness of sacrifice for others, in which the loftiest priesthood consists. Prophecy therefore, the Service of Men by the Word of God, was for Israel the highest and most essential of all service. It was the individual's and it was the nation's ideal. As there was no true king and no true priest, so there was no true man, without the Word. *Would to God,* said Moses, *that all the Lord's people were prophets.* And in our prophecy Israel exclaims: *Listen, O Isles, unto me; and hearken, ye peoples from far. He hath made my mouth like a whetted sword, in the shadow of His hand hath He hid me.*

At first it seems a forlorn hope thus to challenge the attention of the world in the dialect of one of its most obscure provinces,—a dialect, too, which was already dwindling even there. But the fact only serves more forcibly to emphasise the belief of these prophets, that the word committed to what they must have known to be a dying language was the Word of God Himself,—bound to render immortal the tongue in which it was spoken, bound to re-echo to the ends of the earth, bound to touch the conscience and commend itself to the reason of universal humanity. We have seen, and will again see, how our prophet insists upon the creative and omnipotent power of God's Word; so we need



not dwell longer on this instance of his faith. Let us look rather at what he expresses as Israel's preparation for the teaching of it.

To him the discipline and qualification of the prophet nation—and that means, of every Servant of God—in the high office of the Word, are threefold.

1. First, he lays down the supreme condition of Prophecy, that behind the Voice there must be the Life. Before he speaks of his gifts of Speech, the Servant emphasises his peculiar and consecrated life. *From the womb Yahweh called me, from my mother's midst made signal my name.* As we all know, Israel's message to the world was largely Israel's life. The Old Testament is not a set of dogmas, nor a philosophy, nor a vision ; but a history, the record of a providence, the testimony of experience, utterances called forth by historical occasions from a life conscious of the purpose for which God has called it and set it apart through the ages. But these words, which the prophet nation uses, were first used of an individual prophet. Like so much else in 'Second Isaiah,' we find a suggestion of them in the call of Jeremiah. *Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth from the womb I consecrated thee : I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations.*<sup>1</sup> A prophet is not only a voice. A prophet is a life behind a voice. He who would speak for God must have lived for God. According to the profound insight of the Old Testament, speech is not the expression of a few thoughts of a man, but the utterance of his whole life. A man blossoms through his lips ; <sup>2</sup> and no man is a prophet, whose word is not the virtue and the flower of a gracious and a consecrated life.

<sup>1</sup> Jer. i. 5.

<sup>2</sup> See vol. i, p. 69.



2. The second discipline of the prophet is the Art of Speech. *He hath made my mouth like a whetted sword, in the shadow of His hand hath He hid me: He hath made me a polished arrow, in His quiver hath He laid me up.* It is very evident, that in these words the Servant does not only recount technical qualifications, but a moral discipline as well. The edge and brilliance of his speech are stated as the effect of solitude, but of a solitude that was at the same time a nearness to God. Now solitude is a great school of eloquence. In speaking of the Semitic race, of which Israel was part, we pointed out that, prophet-race of the world as it has proved, it sprang from the desert, and nearly all its branches have inherited the desert's clear and august style of speech; for, in the leisure and serene air of the desert, men speak as they speak nowhere else. But Israel talks of a solitude, which was the shadow of God's hand, and the fastness of God's quiver; a seclusion which, to the desert's art of eloquence, added inspiration by God, and concentration upon His main purpose in the world. The desert sword felt the grasp of God; He laid the Semitic arrow in store for a unique end.<sup>1</sup>

3. But in chap. l. 4, 5 the Servant unfolds the most beautiful understanding of the Secret of Prophecy ever unfolded in any literature, and worth quoting again by us, if so we may get it by heart.

*Yahweh the Lord hath given me  
The tongue of the taught,  
To know how to answer the weary  
With a word that . . .*

<sup>1</sup> See p. 258.

*Morning by morning He openeth mine ear  
To hear as the taught.  
And I, I was not rebellious,  
Nor turned away back.*

The prophet, say these beautiful lines, learns his speech, as the pupil, by listening. Grace is poured upon the lips through the open ear. It is the lesson of our Lord's Ephphatha. When He took the deaf man with the impediment in his speech aside from the multitude privately, He said unto him, not, Be loosed, but, *Be opened*; and first *his ears were opened*, and then the *bond of his tongue was loosed*, and he *spake plain*. To speak, then, the prophet must listen; but mark to what he must listen! The secret of his eloquence lies not in the hearing of thunder, nor in the knowledge of mysteries, but in a daily wakefulness to the lessons and experience of common life. *Morning by morning He openeth mine ear*. This is very characteristic of Hebrew prophecy and Hebrew wisdom, which listened for the truth of God in the voices of each day, drew their parables from things the rising sun lights up to every wakeful eye, and were, in the bulk of their doctrine, the virtues, needed day by day, of justice, temperance, and mercy, and in the bulk of their judgements the results of everyday observation and experience. The strength of the Old Testament lies in this its realism, its daily vigilance and experience of life. It is contact with life—the life, not of the yesterday of its speakers, but of their to-day—that makes its voice so fresh and helpful to the weary. He whose ear is daily open to the music of his current life will always find himself in possession of words that refresh and stimulate.

But serviceable speech needs more than attentiveness

and experience. Having gained the truth, the prophet must be obedient and loyal to it. Yet obedience and loyalty to the truth are the beginnings of martyrdom, of which the Servant now goes on to speak as the natural and immediate consequence of his prophecy.

### III. THE SERVANT AS MARTYR

The classes of men, who suffer physical ill-usage at the hands of their fellow-men, may roughly be described as three,—the Foe in War, the Criminal, and the Prophet; and of these three we have only to read history to know that the Prophet fares by far the worst. However fatal men's treatment of their enemies in war or of their criminals may be, it is, nevertheless, subject to a certain order, code of honour or principle of justice. But in all ages the Prophet has been the target for the most licentious spite and cruelty; for torture, indecency, and filth past belief. Although our own civilisation has outlived the system of physical punishment for speech, we even yet see philosophers and statesmen, who have used no weapons but exposition and persuasion, treated by their opponents—who would speak of a foreign enemy with respect—with gross epithets, vile abuse, and insults, that the offenders would not pour upon a criminal. If we have this under our own eyes, let us think how the Prophet must have fared before humanity learned to meet speech by speech. Because men attacked it, not with the sword of the invader or with the knife of the assassin, but with words, therefore (till not very long ago) society let loose upon them the foulest indignities and most horrible torments. Socrates' valour as a soldier did not save him from the slander, the false witness, the unjust trial and the poison, with which the Athenians

answered his speech against themselves. Even Hypatia's womanhood did not awe the mob from tearing her to pieces for her teaching. This unique and invariable experience of the Prophet is summed up and clenched in the name Martyr. Martyr originally meant a *witness or witness-bearer*, but now it is the synonym for every shame and suffering which the cruel ingenuity of men's hearts can devise for those they hate. A Book of Battles is horrible enough, but at least valour and honour have kept down in it the baser passions. A Newgate Chronicle is ugly enough, but there at least is discipline and an hospital. You have got to go to a Book of Martyrs to see to what sourness, wickedness, malignity, and ferocity men's hearts can lend themselves. There is something in the mere utterance of truth, that rouses the very devil in the hearts of many men.

Thus it had always been in Israel, nation not only of prophets, but of the slayers of prophets. According to Christ, prophet-slaying was the ineradicable habit of Israel. *Ye are the sons of them that slew the prophets. . . . O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killer of prophets and stoner of them that are sent unto her!* To them who bare it the word of their God had always been a *reproach*: cause of estrangement, indignities, torments, and sometimes of death. Up to the time of our prophet there had been the following notable sufferers for the Word: Elijah; Micaiah the son of Imlah; Isaiah, if the story be true that he was slain by Manasseh; but nearer, more lonely, and more heroic than all, Jeremiah, a *laughing-stock* and *mockery*, *reviled*, *smitten*, fettered, and condemned to death. In words which recall the experience of so many individual Israelites, and most of which were used by Jeremiah of himself, the Servant of Yahweh describes his

martyrdom in immediate consequence from his prophecy. The measure is still that of the Kinah.

1. 5. *And I, I was not rebellious  
Nor turned away back.*
6. *My back I gave to the smiters,  
My cheeks to them that pluck out the hair.<sup>1</sup>  
My face I never have hidden  
From insults and spitting.<sup>2</sup>*

It is not impossible to read these lines as metaphors of national sufferings,<sup>3</sup> either those borne by the real, the righteous nation from the rest of it,<sup>4</sup> or those borne by all Israel from the Gentiles.<sup>5</sup> But they also reflect and more exactly, the reproaches and pains which, for the sake of God's word, individual Israelites suffered from their rulers or from the crowd. It is difficult to think that the prophet had not such individuals or one such, in his mind; and to mark here symptoms of his concentration on a single person.<sup>6</sup> But even if he still conceived the Servant as the nation, actual or ideal, it was surely by some Divine instinct that he used of them metaphors which encouraged the later

<sup>1</sup> In English this line must be overloaded. Heb. expresses the last half of it by one word, a participle, *the pluckers*, or *clawers*, or *teasers*; cf. Neh. xiii. 25, where both the *smiting* and *plucking* of individuals is mentioned.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Num. xii. 14; Deut. xxv. 9—both of individuals.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ps. cxxix. 3: *the plowers plowed upon my back*, where Israel is the speaker.

<sup>4</sup> So Duhm, Skinner, and Box. But for Duhm's opinion, see n. 6.

<sup>5</sup> So Marti and others.

<sup>6</sup> On ver. 6 Duhm deprecates the identification of the Servant with the 'true Israel,' and pertinently remarks that while vv. 8, 9 exclude the idea that the heathen are the adversaries of the Servant, for 'they could *smite*, but hardly *accuse* him'; they also speak for the individual character of the Servant.'



faith in the Servant as an individual, and led at last to the recognition of his appearance in One Person.

But, returning from this digression on the person of the Servant to his fate, let us emphasise again, that his sufferings came to him as the result of his prophesying. They are not penal, they are not yet felt to be vicarious. They are simply the reward with which obdurate Israel met all her prophets, the inevitable martyrdom which followed the uttering of God's Word. And in this the Servant's experience forms a counterpart to that of our Lord. For to Christ also reproach and agony and death—whatever higher meaning they evolved—came as the result of His Word. The fact that Jesus suffered as our great High Priest must not make us forget, that His sufferings fell upon Him because He was a Prophet. He argued explicitly He must suffer, because so suffered the prophets before Him. He put Himself in the line of the martyrs: as they had killed the servants, He said, so would they kill the Son. Thus it happened. His enemies sought to *entangle Him in His talk*: it was for His talk they brought Him to trial. Each torment and indignity which the Prophet-Servant relates, Jesus suffered to the letter. They put Him to shame and insulted Him;<sup>1</sup> His helpless hands were bound; they spat in His face and smote Him with their palms; they mocked and reviled Him; scourged Him again; teased and tormented Him; hung Him between thieves; and to the last the ribald jests went up, not only from the soldiers and the rabble, but from the religious authorities as well, to whom His fault had been that He preached another word than their own. The literal fulfilments

<sup>1</sup> How all their meanness, how all the sense of shame from which He suffered, break forth in these words: *Are ye come out as against a robber?*



of our prophecy are striking, but the main fulfilment, of which they are only incidents, is, that like the Servant, our Lord suffered directly as a Prophet. He enforced and He submitted to the essential obligation, which lies upon the true Prophet, of suffering for the Word's sake. Let us carry this with us to our final study of the Suffering Servant as the expiation for sin.

In the meantime, we have to conclude the Servant's appearance as Martyr in chap. 1. He has accepted his martyrdom; but he feels it is not the end with him. God will bring him through, and vindicate him in the eyes of the world. For the world, in their usual way, will say that because he gives them a new truth he must be wrong, and because he suffers he is surely guilty and cursed before God. But he will not let himself be confounded, for God is his help and advocate.

1. 7. *But Yahweh the Lord was my Helper,<sup>1</sup>*

*So I was not abashed,*

*So I set my face like a flint*

*And knew I should not be ashamed.*

8. *Near is my Justifier! Who will dispute with me?*

*Let us stand up together,*

*Whoever contests my cause,<sup>2</sup>*

*Let him approach me.*

9. *Lo, Yahweh the Lord is my help,*

*Who is he would condemn me?*

*Lo, all of them<sup>3</sup> rot as a garment,*

*Moths shall devour them.*

<sup>1</sup> So LXX.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *Is Baal of my cause, i.e., party to my cause.*

<sup>3</sup> LXX *you.*

These lines, in which the Servant and Martyr of the Word defies every possible adversary to his cause and asserts that God is about to vindicate him, are used by Paul to proclaim the spiritual justification which comes through faith in the sufferings of Him Who was indeed God's Holy Servant.<sup>1</sup>

The remaining two verses of chap. I are somewhat difficult. The first still speaks of the Servant<sup>2</sup> and distinguishes him—as we must clearly note—from the God-fearing in Israel. Some take them as a later addition,<sup>3</sup> but this is uncertain.

10. *Who among you is a fearer of Yahweh,  
Hearkening<sup>4</sup> the voice of His Servant?  
Who walks in dark places  
And gleam he has none?  
Let him trust in the Name of Yahweh,  
And lean on his God.*

That is, every pious soul in Israel, though in darkness, is to take the Servant for an example; for the Servant in distress *leans upon his God*. And so Paul's application of the Servant's words to the individual believer is correct. But if our prophet is able to think of the Servant as an example to the individual Israelite, that surely is not very far from the conception of the Servant himself as an individual.

If ver. 10 is addressed to the pious in Israel, ver. 11 would seem to turn with a last word—as the last words of the discourses in Second Isaiah so often turn—to the wicked in Israel.

<sup>1</sup> Romans viii. 31 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Though Cheyne takes him here as the prophet.

<sup>3</sup> Duhm, Cheyne, Marti, and Box.

<sup>4</sup> So Heb. But LXX, followed by the just-mentioned critics, reads *let him hearken*.

1. II. *Lo ! all you players with fire,<sup>1</sup>  
 That gird you with <sup>2</sup> firebrands !  
 Walk on in the light of your fire,  
 In the firebrands ye kindled.  
 This from my hand shall be yours ;  
 Ye shall lie down in sorrow.*

It is difficult to know, who are meant by this warning. An old and almost forgotten interpretation is, that the prophet meant those exiles who played with the fires of political revolution, instead of abiding the deliverance of the Lord. But there is now current the more general interpretation that these incendiaries are the revilers and abusers of the Servant within Israel : for so the Psalms speak of the slingers of burning words at the righteous. We notice, however, that the metaphor stands over against those in Israel who *walk in dark places and have no light*. In contrast to that kind of life, this may be the kind that coruscates with vanity, flashes with pride, or burns and scorches with evil passions. We have a similar name for such a life. We call it a display of fireworks. The prophet tells them, who depend on nothing but their own false fires, how transient these are, how quickly quenched.

But is it not weird, that on our prophet's stage, however brilliantly its centre shines with figures of heroes and deeds of salvation, there should always be this lurid background of evil and accursed men ?

<sup>1</sup> *Kindlers of fire* is the literal rendering. But the word is not the common word to kindle, and is here used of wanton fire-raising.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Prov. xxvi. 18. But following Secker most moderns read *set firebrands afire* or *afame*.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE SUFFERING SERVANT

#### ISAIAH LII. 13-LIII

WE are now arrived at the last of the passages on the Servant of the Lord. It is known to Christendom as the Fifty-third of Isaiah, but its verses have, unfortunately, been divided between two chapters, lii. 13-15 and liii. Before we attempt the interpretation of this high and solemn passage of Revelation, let us look at its position in our prophecy, and examine its structure.

The peculiarities of the style and of the vocabulary of chap. lii. 13-liii, along with the fact, that, if it be omitted, the prophecies on either side readily flow together, have led some critics to suppose it to be an insertion, borrowed from an earlier writer.<sup>1</sup> The style—broken, sobbing, and recurrent—is certainly a change from the forward, flowing sentences, on which we have been carried up till now, and there are a number of words that we find quite new to us. Yet surely both style and words are fully accounted for by the novel, tragic nature of the subject, to which the prophet has

<sup>1</sup> Thus Ewald supposed ch. lii. 13-liii to be an elegy upon some martyr in the persecutions under Manasseh. Professor Briggs, as we have noticed before, claims to have discovered that all the passages in the Servant are parts of a trimeter poem, older than the rest of the prophecy, which he finds to be in hexameters. See p. 18.

brought us: regret and remorse, though they speak through the same lips as hope and the assurance of salvation, must necessarily do so with a different accent and set of terms. Criticism surely overreaches itself, when it suggests that a writer, so versatile and dramatic as our prophet, could not have written chap. lii. 13–liii along with, say, chap. xl or chap. lii. 1–12, or chap. liv. We might as well be asked to assign to different authors Hamlet's soliloquy, and the King's conversation, in the same play, with the ambassadors from Norway. To aver that if chap. lii. 13–liii were left out, no one who had not seen it would miss it, so closely does chap. liv follow on to chap. lii. 12, is to aver what means nothing. In any dramatic work you may leave out the finest passage,—from a Greek tragedy its grandest chorus, or from a play of Shakespeare's the hero's soliloquy,—without seeming, to eyes that have not seen what you have done, to have disturbed the connection of the whole. Observe the juncture in our prophecy at which this last passage on the Servant appears. It is one exactly the same as that at which another great passage on the Servant was inserted (chap. xlix. 1–9), *viz.*, just after a call to the people to seize the redemption achieved for them and to come forth from Babylon. It is the kind of climax or pause in their tale, which dramatic writers of all kinds employ for the solemn utterance of principles lying at the back, or transcending the scope, of the events of which they treat. To say the least it is surely more probable that our prophet himself employed so natural an opportunity to give expression to his highest truths about the Servant, than that some one else took his work, broke up another already extant work on the Servant, and thrust the pieces of the latter into the former. Moreover, we shall find many of the ideas,

as well as of the phrases, of chap. lii. 13–liii to be essentially the same as some we have already encountered in our prophecy.<sup>1</sup>

There is then no evidence that this singular prophecy ever stood apart from its present context, or that it was written by another writer than the prophet, by whom we have hitherto found ourselves conducted. On the contrary, while it has links with what goes before it, we see good reasons why the prophet should choose just this moment for uttering its unique and transcendent contents, as well as why he should employ in it a style and a vocabulary, so different from his usual.

Turning now to the structure of chap. lii. 13–liii, we observe that, as arranged in the Canon, there are fifteen verses in the prophecy. These fifteen verses fall into five strophes of three verses each, as printed by the Revised English Version. When set in their own original lines, however, the strophes appear, not of equal, but of increasing length. As will be seen from the version given below, the first (chap. lii. 13–15) has nine lines, the second (chap. liii. 1–3) has ten lines, the third (vv. 4–6) has twelve lines, the fourth (vv. 7–9) thirteen lines, the fifth (vv. 10–12) fourteen lines. This increase would be more regular, if, in the fourth strophe, we made either the first two lines one, or the last two one, and if in the fifth we ran the first two lines of verse 11 together,—changes which the metre allows and some translators have adopted. But, in either case,

<sup>1</sup> I may quote Dillmann's opinion on this last point: 'Andererseits sind nicht bloß die Grundgedanken und auch einzelne Wendungen wie 52, 13–15, 53, 7, 11, 12 durch 42, 1 ff. 49, 1 ff. 50, 3 ff. so wohl vorbereitet und so sehr in Übereinstimmung damit, dass an eine fast unveränderte Herübernahme des Abschnitts aus einer verlorenen Schrift (*Ev.*) nicht gedacht werden kann, sondern derselbe doch wesentlich als Werk des Vrf. angesehen werden muss' (*Commentary*, 4th ed., 1890, p. 453).



we perceive a regular increase from strophe to strophe, that is not only one of the many marks with which this most artistic of poems has been elaborated, but gives the reader the very solemn impression of a truth that is ever gathering more of human life into itself, and sweeping forward with fuller and more resistless volume.

Each strophe, it is well to notice, begins with one word or two words which summarise the meaning of the whole strophe and form a title for it. Thus, after the opening exclamation *Behold*, the words *My Servant shall prosper* form, as we shall see, not only a summary of the first strophe, in which his ultimate exaltation is described, but the theme of the whole prophecy. Strophe ii begins *Who hath believed*, and accordingly in this strophe the unbelief and thoughtlessness of them who saw the Servant without feeling the meaning of his suffering is confessed. *Surely our sicknesses* fitly entitles strophe iii, in which the people describe how the Servant in his suffering was their substitute. *Oppressed yet he humbled himself* is the headline of strophe iv, and that strophe deals with the humility and innocence of the Servant in contrast to the injustice accorded him. While the headline of strophe v, *But Yahweh had purposed*, brings us back to the main theme of the poem, that behind men's treatment of the Servant is God's holy will ; which theme is elaborated and brought to its conclusion in strophe v. These opening and entitling words of each strophe might be printed, in translation, in larger type than the rest.

As in much of Hebrew poetry, so here, the measure is neither regular nor smooth, and does not depend on rhyme. Yet there is an amount of assonance, which at times approaches to rhyme. Much of the meaning of the poem depends on the use of the personal pro-

nouns—*we* and *he* stand contrasted to each other—and it is these coming in a lengthened form at the end of many of the lines that suggest to the ear something like rhyme. For instance, in liii. 5, 6, the second and third verses of the third strophe, two of the lines run out on the bisyllable -ênū, two on înu, and two on the word lānū, while the third has ênu, not at the end, but in the middle; in each case, the pronominal suffix of the first person plural. We transcribe these lines to show the effect of this.

Wehu' m<sup>e</sup>holal mipp<sup>e</sup>sha'ênū  
 Mēdhukka' me'ăwōnōthênū  
 Mūsar sh<sup>e</sup>lōmēnū 'alaw  
 Ubhahābhurātho nirpa'-lānū  
 Kullānū kaṣṣ'on ta'înu  
 'îsh lēdharko panînū  
 Wa Yahweh hip<sup>h</sup>gî 'a bô 'eth-'awon kullānū.

This is the strophe in which the assonance comes oftenest to rhyme; but in strophes i and ii -ēhū, -ānū and -ênū end several lines. These and other assonants occur also at the beginning and in the middle of lines. We must remember that in all the cases quoted it is the personal pronouns which give the assonance,—the personal pronouns on which so much of the meaning of the poem turns; and that, therefore, the parallelism primarily intended by the writer is one rather of meaning than of sound. The pair of lines parallel in meaning, though not in sound, which forms so large a part of Hebrew poetry, is used throughout the poem; but the use of it is varied and elaborated to a unique degree. The very same words and phrases are repeated, and placed on points, from which they seem to call to each other; as, for instance, the double *many* in strophe i, the *of us all* in strophe iii, and *nor opened he his mouth* in strophe iv. The ideas are very few and very

simple ; the words *he, we, his, ours, see, hear, know, bear, sickness, strike, stroke*, and *many* form, with prepositions and particles, the bulk of the prophecy. It will be evident how singularly suitable this recurrence is for the expression of reproach, and of sorrowful recollection. It is the nature of grief and remorse to harp upon the one dear form, the one most vivid pain. The finest instance of this repetition is ver. 6, with its opening keynote '*kullanu*'—*of us all like sheep went astray*, with its close on that keynote *guilt of us all*, '*kullanu*.' But throughout notes are repeated, and bars recur, expressive of what was done to the Servant, or what the Servant did for man, which seem in their recurrence to say, You cannot hear too much of me : I am the very Gospel. A peculiar sadness is lent to the music by the letters *h* and *l* in '*holie*' and '*hehelie*,' the word for sickness or ailing (ailing is the English equivalent in sense and sound), which happens so often in the poem. The new words, which have been brought to vary this recurrence of a few simple features, are mostly of a sombre type. The heavier letters throng the lines : grievous *bs* and *ms* are multiplied, and syllables with long vowels before *m* and *w*. But the words sob as well as tramp ; and here and there one has a wrench and one a cry in it.

Most wonderful and mysterious of all is the spectral fashion in which the prophecy presents its Hero. He is named only in the first line and once again : elsewhere He is spoken of as He. We never hear or see Himself. But all the more solemnly is He there : a shadow upon countless faces, a grievous memory on the hearts of the speakers. He so haunts all we see and all we hear, that we feel it is not Art, but Conscience, that speaks of Him.

Here is now the prophecy itself, rendered into

English quite literally, except for a conjunction here and there, and, as far as possible, in the rhythm of the original. A few necessary notes on difficult words and phrases are given.

## I

- lii. 13. *Lo, My Servant shall prosper,<sup>1</sup> shall rise,  
Be uplifted and highly exalted !*  
14. *As many as at him<sup>2</sup> were astonished,  
—So marred from a man's was his visage,  
And his form from the sons of men—*  
15. *As many be the nations he startles,<sup>3</sup>  
Kings before him shall shut<sup>4</sup> their mouths ;  
For what had never been told them they see,<sup>5</sup>  
And what they had heard not they have to think  
through.<sup>5</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> The Heb. verb means both *to deal wisely* and *to prosper* or *succeed* (Josh. i. 7, 2 Sam. xviii. 14). But the former sense (LXX, Cheyne) is as irrelevant to what follows next as the latter is relevant. Therefore proposals to elide the verb (Duhm), or instead of it to read *Israel* (Budde, Marti) are unnecessary. LXX confirm the verb but omit *shall rise*. Needless, too, is the omission of the second verb in the next line (Beer, *Z.A.T.W.*, 1891, 45). Vulg. finely renders 'extolletur, sublimis erit et valde elatus.'

<sup>2</sup> So Targ. and Syr. Heb. has *at thee*. To match this line and so complete the couplet, Cheyne proposes the addition of another line: *so will many in him take delight*; and Marti *and princes shuddered at him*; either of which emendations is tolerable only if we assume that the prophet was bound by rigid rules of verse, an assumption we have seen to be unreasonable.

<sup>3</sup> Syr. Vulg. and A.V. *sprinkles*. 'The word means "to cause to leap or spring" when applied to liquids, to spirt or sprinkle them; in the *accusative*, but spirted *upon* the person. In this passage the person 'many nations' is in the *accusative*, and it is simply treason against the Hebrew language to render *sprinkle*' (A. B. Davidson, *Expositor*, second series, viii. 443). LXX has θαυμάσονται ἔθνη πολλά ἐπ' αὐτῷ.

<sup>4</sup> Budde would read *open wide* in view of the speakers in liii. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Prophetic perfects = presents. *Think through* or *between* is the radical sense of the verb.

## II

- liii. 1. *Who gave belief to that which we heard,<sup>1</sup>  
 And the arm of Yahweh to whom was it shown ?  
 For he sprang like a sapling<sup>2</sup> before us,<sup>3</sup>  
 And a root from ground that is parched.  
 No form was his nor beauty, that we should regard  
 him<sup>4</sup>  
 Nor aspect that we should desire him.*
3. *Despised and rejected of men,  
 Man of pains and familiar with ailing,  
 And as one we cover the face from,<sup>5</sup>  
 Despised<sup>6</sup> and we did not esteem him.*

## III

4. *But 'twas surely our ailments he bore  
 And our pains he took for his burden,<sup>7</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Not *our report* (or *what we caused to be heard*) as in A.V. and R.V., but as in the footnote to the latter, *what we heard*. Cheyne paraphrases, *who indeed can yet believe our revelation, i.e., of the prophet and his fellows*. Budde and Marti, *who would have believed*.

<sup>2</sup> Masculine participle, lit. *sucker*. Dr. John Hunter (*Christian Treasury*) suggests succulent plant such as grows in desert. In Job viii. 16, xiv. 7, xv. 30, the feminine is used of the tender shoot of any tree, and feminine plural of the same in Ezek. xvii. 22. Here LXX gives παῖδιον.

<sup>3</sup> So since Ewald most moderns; Heb., LXX, *before him*; Marti *beforetime*.

<sup>4</sup> This line is unduly prolonged. Bertholet and Marti therefore delete *nor beauty*. LXX confirms Heb., but in the next line omits *that we should desire him*.

<sup>5</sup> Which Cheyne notes was the usual practice towards lepers.

<sup>6</sup> Or possibly *we despised*.

<sup>7</sup> In each of these two lines both metre and meaning set *our* and *he* in emphatic contrast. *Took for his burden* or *loaded himself* with them, a heavy grievous word, also used by God of Himself in xlv. 4. See p. 196.

*While we—we accounted him stricken  
Smitten of God and afflicted.<sup>1</sup>*

5. *Yet he was pierced for crimes that were ours,<sup>2</sup>  
Crushed for the guilt of deeds<sup>3</sup> that were ours.  
The chastisement of our peace<sup>4</sup> was on him,  
And by his stripes healing is ours.*
6. *All of us like to sheep went astray,<sup>5</sup>  
We turned, each man his own way,  
And Yahweh made light upon him  
The guilt<sup>6</sup> of us all.*

## IV

7. *Oppressed, yet he humbled himself  
Nor opened his mouth—  
As a lamb that is led to the slaughter,  
And a ewe 'fore her shearers is dumb—  
Nor opened his mouth.<sup>7</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> *Stricken, i.e., with plague, Vulg. quasi leprosum. Afflicted, there may be more in this verb than afflicted, perhaps humbled or degraded.*

<sup>2</sup> The possessive pronoun has been purposely put at the end of this line and the following in order to give the emphasis and rhyme of the original; though the Heb. suffix *-ēnû* and (at the end of vv. 5 and 6) the Heb. *lānû* and *-ānû* are so much more musical than the Eng. *ours*. For pierced LXXA reads *disgraced*. So Cheyne and others.

<sup>3</sup> *Lit. guilty deeds or iniquities.*

<sup>4</sup> So literally as in Heb. and in A.V. Or *for our peace the discipline was on him*. Moffatt: *'Twas for our welfare he was chastised.*

<sup>5</sup> This and the next line also rhyme, but with the more musical first plur. of the verbs—*innu*.

<sup>6</sup> To lengthen this line Beer would read *our iniquities*. LXX has *sins*.

<sup>7</sup> This line is omitted by most moderns as if due to a scribe's mistaken repetition of the second line in ver. 7. Yet the repetition has a pathos of its own, and may be original.



liii. 8. *Through oppression and judgement*<sup>1</sup> *away he was taken*

*And as for his fate*<sup>2</sup> *who reflected,*  
*That he was cut off from the land of the living,*  
*For the crime of my people*<sup>3</sup> *was stricken to death.*<sup>4</sup>

9. *So they set with the wicked his grave*  
*With the workers of evil*<sup>5</sup> *his tomb,*<sup>6</sup>  
*Though violence none had he wrought*  
*Nor was guile in his mouth.*

## V

10. *But Yahweh had purposed to crush and to humble him.*<sup>7</sup>

*If his life he*<sup>8</sup> *would give as an offering for guilt,*  
*A seed should he see, should prolong his days,*  
*And the purpose of Yahweh by his hand should prosper.*

<sup>1</sup> So literally the Heb. = *an oppressive judgement or doom* (Cheyne); other readings are: *excluded or debarred from law or justice* (regarded by Budde as possible, accepted by Marti and Box); from humiliation (Beer); LXX ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει.

<sup>2</sup> Reading, with Cheyne, Marti, and Budde (?) דרכו for דורו, *his generation or contemporaries*, to which Ewald and Beer adhere. So LXX.

<sup>3</sup> So Heb., LXX, Ewald, etc. By slight changes some read *his people*; others *peoples*; and others *our crimes* (Budde).

<sup>4</sup> So since Lowth most moderns, following the LXX.

<sup>5</sup> Reading עשירי (with Budde, Buhl, Beer, etc.) for Heb. עשיר, *the rich*, which, however, is confirmed by LXX. Cheyne and Marti read *wicked* here and *rebellious* in the previous line.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. *in his deaths*, LXX *his death*. But by a slight change it is possible to read בביתו, *in his house, i.e. tomb*, or even במתו, *his high place, i.e., sepulchre*. But the text is uncertain. Ball proposes the phrase in Eccles. xii. 5, *his long home*; so, too, Box.

<sup>7</sup> *To humble*, so Cheyne, the most probable of many readings possible by a slight change. Ewald and Budde, following the LXX, read *with sickness*; Dillmann, *incurably*. LXX, taking the previous verb in its Aramaic sense, renders *The Lord wished to cleanse him of the plague*, followed by Duhm and Whitehouse. Beer reads *but My purpose*.

<sup>8</sup> *He*, so Vulg., Ewald, Cheyne, Beer, and others; Heb. *thou*.

11. *From the travail of his soul shall he see,  
By his knowledge be satisfied.<sup>1</sup>  
Righteous My Servant brings righteousness to  
many,  
And their iniquities loads on himself.*
12. *Therefore I set him a share<sup>2</sup> with the great,  
And with the strong he shall share the spoil.  
For that he poured out his life to the death,  
And with transgressors let him be reckoned.  
Whereas 'tis the sin of many he bears,  
And for transgressors strikes in.<sup>3</sup>*

Let us now take up the interpretation strophe by strophe.

I. Chap. lii. 13-15. When last our eyes were directed to the Servant, he was in suffering unexplained and unvindicated (chap. i. 4-6). His sufferings seemed to have fallen upon him as the consequence of his fidelity to the Word committed to him; the Prophet had inevitably become the Martyr. Further than this his sufferings were not explained, and the Servant was left in them, calling upon God indeed, and sure that God would hear and vindicate him, but as yet unanswered by word of God or word of man.

It is these words, words both of God and of man, which are given in Isaiah, chap. lii. 13-liii. The Sufferer is explained and vindicated, first by God in

<sup>1</sup> I have arranged this couplet on the frequent parallelism in Hebrew verse between *see* and *know*, i.e., see ahead and then experience. See also Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy*, 359. But the text and metre of all these four lines are very uncertain, not to say corrupt. The many emendations proposed are ingenious and bold, but their variety creates distrust in them all.

<sup>2</sup> On the ground of the LXX, Skinner reads *he shall inherit*, and Budde *I shall give him a heritage*.

<sup>3</sup> LXX and Budde *and for their misdeeds interposes*, i.e., acts as Mediator.

the first strophe (lii. 13-15) then by the Conscience of Men, His own people, in the second and third (liii. 1-6); and then, as it appears, the Divine Voice, or the Prophet speaking for it, resumes in strophes iv and v, and concludes in a strain similar to strophe i.

God's explanation and vindication of the Sufferer is, then, given in the first strophe. It is summed up in the first line, and in one very pregnant word. Jeremiah had said of the Messiah, *He shall reign as a King and deal wisely or prosper*; <sup>1</sup> and so God says here of the Servant, *Behold he shall deal wisely or prosper*. The Hebrew verb does not get full expression through any English one. In rendering it *shall deal wisely* or *prudently* our translators undoubtedly touch the quick of it. For it is originally a mental process or quality: *has insight, understands, is farseeing*. But then it also includes the effect of this—*understands so as to get on, deals wisely so as to succeed, is practical* both in his way of working and in being sure of his end. Ewald has found an almost exact equivalent in German, 'hat Geschick'; for Geschick means both *skill* or *address* and *fate* or *destiny*. The Hebrew verb is the most practical in the whole language, for this is precisely the point which the prophecy seeks to bring out about the Servant's sufferings. They are practical. He is practical in them. He endures them, not for their own sake, but for some practical end of which he is aware and to which they must assuredly bring him. His failure to convince men by his word, the pain and spite which seem to be his only wage, is not the last of him, but the beginning and the way to what is higher. *So shall he rise and be lift up and be very high*. The suffering, which in chap. 1 seemed to be the Servant's

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xxiii. 5.

misfortune, is here seen as his wisdom which shall issue in his glory.

But of themselves men do not see this, and they need to be convinced. Pain, the blessed means of God, is man's abhorrence and perplexity. All along the history of the world the Sufferer has been the astonishment and stumbling-block of humanity. The barbarian gets rid of him ; he is the first difficulty with which every young literature wrestles ; to the end he remains the problem of philosophy and the sore test of faith. It is not native to men to see meaning or profit in the Sufferer ; they are staggered by him, they see no reason or promise in him. So did men receive this unique Sufferer, this Servant of the Lord. *The many were astonished at him ; so marred from man's was his visage and his form from that of the children of men.* But his life is to teach them the opposite of their impressions, and to bring them out of their perplexity into reverence before the revealed purpose of God in the Sufferer. *As they that were astonished at him were many, so shall the nations he startles be many ; kings shall shut their mouths at him, for that which was not told them they see, and that which they have heard not they have to think through,—viz.,* the triumph and influence to which the Servant was consciously led through suffering. There may be some reflection here of the way in which the Gentiles regarded the Suffering Israel, but the reference is vague, and perhaps purposely so.

The first strophe, then, gives us just the general theme. In contrast to human experience God reveals in His Servant that suffering is fruitful, that sacrifice is practical. Pain, in God's service, shall lead to glory.

II. Chap. liii. 1-3. God never speaks but in man. He wakens conscience, and the second strophe of the prophecy (along with the third) is the answer of

conscience to God. Penitent men, looking back from the light of the Servant's exaltation to the time when his humiliation was before their eyes, say, Yes: what God has said is true of us. We were the deaf and the indifferent. We heard, but *who* of us *believed what we heard, and to whom was the arm of the Lord*—His purpose, the hand He had in the Servant's sufferings—*revealed?*<sup>1</sup>

Who are these penitent speakers? Some critics have held them to be the heathen, more have said that they are Israel. But none have pointed out that the writer gives himself no trouble to define them, but seems more anxious to impress us with their consciousness of their moral relation of the Servant. On the whole, it would appear that it is Israel whom the prophet has in mind as the speakers of vv. 1-6. For, besides the fact that the Old Testament knows nothing of a bearing by Israel of the sins of the Gentiles, it is expressly said in ver. 8, that the sins for which the Servant was stricken were the sins of *my people*; which people must be the same as the speakers, for they own in vv. 4-6 that the Servant bore their sins. For these and other reasons the most Christian critics at the present day are probably right when they assume that Israel are the speakers in vv. 1-6;<sup>2</sup> but the reader

<sup>1</sup> Hitzig (among others) held that it is the prophets who are the speakers of ver. 1, and that the voices of the penitent people come in only with ver. 2 or ver. 3. In that case שְׁמוֹעֵתֵינוּ would mean *what we heard from God* (שְׁמוֹעָה is elsewhere used for the prophetic message) and delivered to the people. This interpretation multiplies the *dramatis personæ*, but does not materially alter the meaning of the prophecy. It merely changes part of the penitent people's self-reproach into a reproach cast on them by their prophets. But there is no real reason for introducing the prophets as the speakers of ver. 1.

<sup>2</sup> For the argument that Israel is the speaker, see Hoffmann (*Schriftbeweis*), who was converted from the other view, and Dillmann, 4th ed., *in loco*. An ingenious attempt has been made by Giesebrecht (*Beiträge*



must beware of allowing his attention to be lost in questions of that kind. The art of the poem seems intentionally to leave vague the national relation of the speakers to the Servant, in order the more impressively to bring out their moral attitude towards him. There is an utter disappearance of all lines of separation

*zur Jesaja Kritik*, 1890, p. 146 ff.), in favour of the heathen being the speakers. His reasons are these: (1) It is the heathen who are spoken of in lii. 13-15, and a change to Israel would be too sudden. Answer: The heathen are not exclusively spoken of in lii. 13-15; but if they were a change in the next verse to Israel would not be more rapid than some already made by the prophet. (2) The words in liii. 1 suit the heathen. They have already received the news of the exaltation of the Servant, which in lii. 15 was promised them. This is the שְׂמוֹעֵהֵינוּ, that is, *news we have just heard*. הָאֵמִין is a pluperfect of the subjunctive mood: *Who could or who would have believed this news of the exaltation we have just heard, and the arm of Yahweh to whom was it revealed! i.e., it was revealed to nobody*. Answer: Besides the precariousness of taking הָאֵמִין as a pluperfect subjunctive, this interpretation is opposed to the general effort of the prophecy, which is to expose unbelief before the exaltation, not after it. (3) To get rid of the argument—that, while the speakers own that the Servant bears their sins, it is said the Servant was stricken for the sins of *my people*, and that therefore the speakers must be the same as ‘my people’—Giesebrecht would alter the reading of ver. 8 from מִפְשַׁע עַמִּי נָנַע לָמוּ, *for the transgression of my people was the stroke to him* to מִפְשַׁעָם יִנָּע, *for their transgression was he smitten*.

Since the above was written in 1890, commentators have been divided on the question who are the speakers in liii. 1 ff. ? On the one side are A. B. Davidson: ‘Israel redeemed confess they mistook the Servant’; Skinner: ‘either all Israel or one Israelite in the name of all’; Cheyne: ‘the prophet himself; the Israelites in general saw nothing to admire in the sufferings of the Servant’; similarly Edghill; Box: ‘the prophet himself speaking for the prophetic circle’; Workman: ‘the prophet sometimes for himself, sometimes for his fellow-prophets, and sometimes for the Servant’s Hebrew contemporaries.’ All these, of course, accept the reading in ver. 8: *transgression of my people*. On the other side are those who take the speakers as the heathen—Budde: they ‘must be the peoples and kings of lii. 14 f.’; similarly Marti, Peake, A. R. Gordon, and Moffatt. These, of course, take *my people* in ver. 8 as a textual error. Duhm, after stating these various interpretations, asks: ‘Why should it not be the poet himself who speaks? By no syllable is any of such distant subjects indicated.’



between Jew and Gentile,—both in the first strophe, where, although Gentile names are used, Jews may yet be meant to be included, and in the rest of the poem,—as if the writer wished us to feel that all men stood over against that solitary Servant in a common indifference to his suffering and a common conscience of the guilt he bears. In short, it is no historical situation, such as some critics seem anxious to fasten him down upon, that the prophet reflects; but a certain moral situation, ideal in so far as it was not yet realised,—the state of the quickened human conscience over against a certain Human Suffering, in which, having ignored it at the time, that conscience now realises that the purpose of God was at work.

In vv. 2 and 3 the penitent speakers give us the reasons of their disregard of the Servant in the days of his suffering. In these reasons there is nothing peculiar to Israel, and no special experience of Jewish history is reflected by the terms in which they are conveyed. They are the confession, in general language, of an universal human habit,—the habit of letting the eye cheat the heart and conscience, of allowing the aspect of suffering to blind us to its meaning; of forgetting in our sense of the ugliness and helplessness of pain, that it has a motive, a future, and a God. It took ages to wean mankind from those native feelings of aversion and resentment, which caused them at first to abandon or destroy their sick. And, even now, scorn for the weak and incredulity in the heroism or in the profitableness of suffering are apt to break out in the best of us. We judge by looks; we are hurried by the physical impression, which the sufferer makes on us, or by our pride that we are not as he is, into peremptory and harsh judgements upon him. Every day we allow the dulness of poverty, the ugliness of

disease, the unprofitableness of misfortune, the ludicrousness of failure, to keep back conscience from discovering to us our share of responsibility for them, and to repel our hearts from that sympathy and patience with them, which along with conscience would assuredly discover to us their place in God's Providence and their special significance for ourselves. It is this original sin of man, of which these penitent speakers own themselves guilty.

But no one is ever permitted to rest with a physical or intellectual impression of suffering. The race, the individual, has always been forced by conscience to the task of finding a moral reason for pain ; and nothing so marks man's progress as the successive solutions he has attempted to this problem. The speakers, therefore, proceed in the next part of their confession, strophe iii, to tell us what they first falsely accounted the moral reason of the Servant's suffering and what they afterwards found to be the truth.

III. liii. 4-6. The earliest and most common moral judgement, which men pass upon pain, is that which is implied in its name—that it is penal. A man suffers because God is angry with him and has stricken him. So Job's friends judged him, and so these speakers tell us they had at first judged the Servant. *We had accounted him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted,—stricken*, that is, with a plague of sickness, as Job was, for the simile of the sick man is still kept up ; *smitten of God and degraded or humbled*, for it seemed to them that God's hand was in the Servant's sickness, to punish and disgrace him for his own sins. But now they know they were wrong. The hand of God was indeed upon the Servant, and the reason was sin ; yet the sin was not his, but theirs. *Surely our sicknesses he bore, and our pains he took as his burden. He was pierced for*

*iniquities that were ours. He was crushed for crimes that were ours.* Strictly interpreted, these verses mean no more than that the Servant was involved in the consequences of his people's sins. The verbs *bore* and *made his burden* are indeed taken by some to mean necessarily, removal or expiation; but in themselves, as is clear from their application to Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the whole of the generation of Exile, they mean no more than implication in the reproach and the punishment of the people's sins.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, as we have explained in a note below, it is really impossible to separate the suffering of a Servant, who has been announced as practical and prosperous in his suffering, from the end for which it is endured. We cannot separate the Servant's bearing of the people's guilt from his removal of it. And, indeed, this practical end of his passion springs forth, past all doubt, from the rest of the strophe, which declares that the Servant's sufferings are not only vicarious but redemptive. *The*

<sup>1</sup> **נשא** and **מבל**. In speaking of his country's woes, Jeremiah (x. 19) says: *This is sickness, or my sickness, and I must bear it*, **זה חלי ואשאנו**. Ezekiel (iv. 4) is commanded to lie on his side, and in that symbolic position to *bear the iniquity of His people*, **תשא עונם**. One of the Lamentations (v. 7) complains: *Our fathers have sinned and are not, and we bear* (**מבל**) *their iniquities*. In these cases the meaning of both **נשא** and **מבל** is simply to feel the weight of. The verbs do not convey the sense of *carrying off* or *expiating*. But still it had been said of the Servant that in his suffering he would be practical and prosper; so that when we now hear that he bears his people's sins, we are ready to understand that he does not do this for the mere sake of sharing them, but for a practical purpose, which, of course, can only be their removal. There is, therefore, no need to quarrel with the interpretation of ver. 4, that the Servant *carries away* the suffering with which he is laden. Matthew makes this interpretation (viii. 17) in speaking of Christ's healing. But it is interesting, and not without light upon the free and plastic way in which the New Testament quotes from the Old, that Matthew ignores the original and literal meaning of the quotation, which is that the Servant shared the sicknesses of the people: a sense impossible in the case for which the Evangelist uses the words.

*discipline of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.* Translators agree that *discipline of our peace* must mean discipline which procures our peace. The peace, the healing, is ours, in consequence of the chastisement and the scourging that was his. The next verse gives us the obverse and complement of the same thought. The pain was his in consequence of the sin that was ours. *All we like sheep had gone astray, and God made fall on him the iniquity of us all,*—literally *iniquity*, but inclusive of its guilt and consequences. Nothing could be plainer than these words. The speakers confess, that they know that the Servant's suffering was both vicarious and redemptive.<sup>1</sup>

But how did they get this knowledge? They do not describe any special means by which it came to them. They state this high and novel truth simply as the last step in a process of their own consciousness and reflection. At first they were bewildered by the Servant's suffering; then they thought it contemptible, thus passing upon it an intellectual judgement; then, forced to seek a moral reason for it, they accounted it as penal and due to the Servant for his own sins; then they recognised that its penalty was vicarious, that the Servant was suffering for them; and finally, they knew that it was redemptive, the means of their own healing and peace. This is a natural climax, a logical and moral progress of thought. The last two steps are stated simply as facts of experience following on other facts. Now our prophet usually publishes the truths,

<sup>1</sup> But they do not tell us whether they were totally exempted from suffering by the Servant's pains, or whether they also suffered with him the consequence of their misdeeds. For that question is not now present to their minds. Whether they also suffer or not (and other chapters in the prophecy emphasise the people's bearing of the consequences of their misdeeds), they know that it was not their own, but the Servant's suffering, which was alone the factor in their redemption.

with which he is charged, as the very words of God, introducing them with a solemn and authoritative *Thus saith Yahweh*. But this novel and supreme truth of vicarious and redemptive suffering, this passion and virtue which crowns the Servant's office, is introduced to us, not by the mouth of God, but by the lips of penitent men ; not as an oracle, but as a confession ; not as the commission of Divine authority laid beforehand upon the Servant like his other duties, but as the conviction of the human conscience after the Servant has been lifted up before it. In short, by this unusual turn of his art, the prophet seeks to teach us, that vicarious suffering is not a dogmatic, but an experimental, truth. The substitution of the Servant for the guilty people, and the redemptive force of that substitution, are no arbitrary doctrine, for which God requires from man a mere intellectual assent ; they are no such formal institution of religion as mental indolence and superstition delight to have prepared for their mechanical adherence : but substitutive suffering is a great living fact of human experience, whose outward features are not more evident to men's eyes than its inner meaning is appreciable by their conscience, and of irresistible effect upon their whole moral nature.

Is this lesson of our prophet's art not needed ? Men have always been apt to think of vicarious suffering, and of its function in their salvation, as something above and apart from their moral nature, with a value known only to God and not calculable in the terms of conscience or of man's moral experience ; nay, rather as something that conflicts with man's ideas of morality and justice. Whereas both the fact and the virtue of vicarious suffering come upon us all, as these speakers describe the vicarious sufferings of the Servant to have



come upon them, as a part of inevitable experience. If it be natural, as we saw, for men to be bewildered by the first sight of suffering, to scorn it as futile and to count it the fault of the sufferer himself, it is equally natural and inevitable that these first and hasty theories should be dispelled by the longer experience of life and the more thorough working of conscience. The stricken are not always bearing their own sin. 'Suffering is the minister of justice. This is true in part, yet it also is inadequate to explain the facts. Of all the sorrow which befalls humanity, how small a part falls upon the specially guilty; how much seems rather to seek out the good! We might almost ask whether it is not weakness rather than wrong that is punished in this world.'<sup>1</sup> In every nation, in every family, the innocent suffer for the guilty. Vicarious suffering is not arbitrary or accidental; it comes with our growth; it is of the very nature of things. It is that part of the Service of Man, to which we are all born, and of the reality of which we daily grow more aware.

But even more than its necessity life teaches us its virtue. Vicarious suffering is not a curse. It is Service—Service for God. It proves a power where every other moral force has failed. By it men are redeemed, on whom justice and their proper punishment have been able to effect nothing. Why this should be is very intelligible. We are not so capable of measuring the physical or moral results of our actions upon our own characters or in our own fortunes as we are upon the lives of others; nor do we so awaken to the guilt and heinousness of our sin as when it reaches and implicates lives, which were not partners with us in it. Moreover, while a man's punishment is

<sup>1</sup> *Mystery of Pain*, by James Hinton, p. 27.



apt to give him an excuse for saying, I have expiated my sin myself, and so to leave him self-satisfied and with nothing for which to be grateful or obliged to a higher will ; or while it may make him reckless or plunge him into despair ; so, on the contrary, when he recognises that others feel the pain of his sin and have come under its weight, then shame is quickly born within him, and pity and every other passion that can melt a hard heart. If, moreover, the others who bear his sin do so voluntarily and for love's sake, then how quickly on the back of shame and pity does gratitude rise, and the sense of debt and of constraint to their will ! For all these very intelligible reasons, vicarious suffering has been a powerful redemptive force in the experience of the race. Both the fact of its beneficence and the moral reasons for this are clear enough to lift us above a question, which sometimes gives trouble regarding it,—the question of its justice. Such a question is futile about any service for man, which succeeds as this does where all others have failed, and which proves itself so much in harmony with man's moral nature. But the last shred of objection to the justice of vicarious suffering is surely removed when the sufferer is voluntary as well as vicarious. And, in truth, human experience feels that it has found its highest and its holiest fact in the love that, being innocent itself, stoops to bear its fellows' sins—not only the anxiety and reproach of them, but even the cost and the curse of them. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends ;* and greater Service can no man do to man, than to serve them in this way.

Now in this universal human experience of the inevitableness and the virtue of vicarious suffering, Israel had been deeply baptised. The nation had

been *served* by suffering in all the ways we have just described. Beginning with the belief that all righteousness prospered, Israel had come to see the righteous afflicted in her midst ; the best Israelites had set their minds to the problem, and learned to believe, at least, that such affliction was of God's will,—part of His Providence, and not an interruption to it. Israel, too, knew the moral solidarity of a people : that citizens share each other's sorrows, and that one generation rolls over its guilt upon the next. Frequently had the whole nation been spared for a pious remnant's sake ; and in the Exile, while all the people were formally afflicted by God, it was but a portion of them whose conscience was quick to the meaning of the chastisement, and of them alone, in their submissive and intelligent sufferance of the Lord's wrath, could the opening gospel of the prophecy be spoken, that they *had accomplished their warfare, and had received of Yahweh's hand double for all their sins*. But still more vivid than these collective substitutes for the people were the individuals, who, at different points in Israel's history, had stood forth and taken up as their own the nation's conscience and stooped to bear the nation's curse. Far away back, a Moses had offered himself for destruction, if for his sake God would spare his sinful and thoughtless countrymen. In a psalm of the Exile it is remembered that,

*He said, that He would destroy them,  
Had not Moses His chosen stood before Him in the  
breach,*

*To turn away His wrath, lest He should destroy.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Psalm cvi. 23 ; cf. also ver. 32, where the other side of the solidarity between Moses and the people comes out. *They angered Him also at the waters of Strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes . . . he spake unadvisedly with his lips.*

And Jeremiah, not by a single heroic resolve, but by the slow agony and martyrdom of a long life, had taken Jerusalem's sin upon his own heart, had felt himself forsaken of God, and had voluntarily shared his city's doom, while his generation, unconscious of their guilt and blind to their fate, despised him and esteemed him not. And Ezekiel, who is Jeremiah's far-off reflection, who could only do in symbol what Jeremiah did in reality, was commanded to lie on his side for days, and so *bear the guilt* of his people.<sup>1</sup>

But in Israel's experience it was not only the human Servant who served the nation by suffering, for God Himself had come down to *carry* His distressed and accursed people, and to *load Himself with them*. Our prophet uses the same two verbs of Yahweh as are used of the Servant.<sup>2</sup> Like the Servant, too, God *was afflicted in all their affliction*; and His love towards them was expended in passion and agony for their sins. Vicarious suffering was not only human, it was Divine.

Was it very wonderful that a people with such an experience, and with such examples, both human and Divine, should at last be led to the thought of One Sufferer, who would exhibit in Himself all the meaning, and procure for His people all the virtue, of that vicarious reproach and sorrow, which a long line of their martyrs had illustrated, and which God had revealed as the passion of His own love? If they had had every example that could fit them to understand the power of such a sufferer, they had also every reason to feel their need of Him. For the Exile had not healed the nation; it had been for the most of them an illustration of that evil effect of punishment to

<sup>1</sup> See p. 368 n.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xlv. 3, 4. See pp. 196 ff., 368 n. of this volume.

which we alluded above. Penal servitude in Babylon had but hardened Israel. *God poured on him the fury of anger, and the strength of battle: it set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.*<sup>1</sup> What the Exile, then, had failed to do, when it brought upon the people their own sins, the Servant, taking these sins upon himself, would surely effect. The people, whom the Exile had only hardened, his vicarious suffering should strike into penitence and lift to peace.

IV. Chap. liii. 7-9. It is probable that with ver. 6 the penitent people have ceased speaking, and that the parable is now taken up by the prophet himself. The voice of God, which uttered the first strophe, does not seem to resume till ver. 11.

If strophe iii confessed that it was for the people's sins the Servant suffered, strophe iv declares that he himself was sinless, and yet silently submitted to all which injustice laid upon him.

Now Silence under Suffering is a strange thing in the Old Testament—a thing absolutely new. No other Old Testament personage could stay dumb under pain, but immediately broke into one of two voices,—voice of guilt or voice of doubt. In the Old Testament the sufferer is always either confessing his guilt to God, or, when he feels no guilt, challenging God in argument. David, Hezekiah, Jeremiah, Job, and the nameless martyred and moribund of the Psalms, all strive and are loud under pain. Why was this Servant the unique and solitary instance of silence under suffering? Because he had a secret which they had not. It had been said of him: *My Servant shall deal wisely or intelligently, shall know what he is about.* He had no guilt of his

<sup>1</sup> Ch. xlii. 25.

own, no doubts of his God. But he was conscious of the end God had in his pain, an end not to be served in any other way, and with all his heart he had given himself to it. It was not punishment he was enduring; it was not the throes of the birth into higher experience, which he was feeling: it was a Service he was performing,—a service laid on him by God, a service for man's redemption, a service sure of results and of glory. Therefore *as a lamb to the slaughter is led, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, he opened not his mouth.*

The next two verses (8, 9) describe how the Servant's Passion was fulfilled. The figure of a sick man was changed in ver. 5 to that of a punished one, and the punishment we now see carried on to death. The two verses are difficult, the readings and renderings of most of the words being very various. But the sense is clear. The Servant's death was accomplished, not on some far hill top by a stroke out of heaven, but in the forms of human law and by men's hands. It was a judicial murder. *By tyranny and by judgement*,—that is, by a forced and tyrannous judgement,—*he was taken off.* To this abuse of law the next verse adds the indifference of public opinion: *and as for his fate, who reflected that he was cut off from, or cut down in, the land of the living*,—that in spite of the form of law which condemned him he was a murdered man,—that *for the transgression of my people he was stricken to death?* So, having conceived him to have been lawfully put to death, they consistently gave him a convict's grave: *they made his grave with the wicked, and he was with felons in his tomb*, though—and on this the strophe emphatically ends—he was an innocent man, *he had done no harm, neither was guile in his mouth.*

Premature sickness and the miscarriage of justice,—



these to Orientals are the two outstanding misfortunes of the individual's life. Take the Psalter, set aside its complaints of the horrors of war and of invasion, and you will find almost all the rest of its sighs rising either from sickness or from the sense of injustice. These were the classic forms of individual suffering in the age and civilisation to which our prophet belonged, and it was natural, therefore, that when he was describing an Ideal or Representative Sufferer, he should fill in his picture with both of them. If we remember this,<sup>1</sup> we shall feel no incongruity in the sudden change of the hero from a sick man to a convict, and back again in ver. 10 from a convict to a sick man. Nor shall we feel disposed to listen to those interpreters, who hold that the basis of this prophecy was the account of an actual historical martyrdom. Had such been the case the prophet would surely have held throughout to one or the other of the two forms of suffering. His sufferer would have been either a leper or a convict, but hardly both. No doubt the details in vv. 8 and 9 are so realistic that they might well be the features of an actual miscarriage of justice; but the like happened too frequently in the Ancient East for such verses to be necessarily any one man's portrait. Perverted justice was the curse of the individual's life,—perverted justice and that stolid, fatalistic apathy of Oriental public opinion, which would probably regard

<sup>1</sup> If we remember this we shall also feel more reason than ever against perceiving the Nation, or any aspect of the Nation, in the Sufferer of ch. liii. For he suffers, as the individual suffers, sickness and legal wrong. Tyrants do not put whole nations through a form of law and judgement. Of course, it is open to those, who hold that the Servant is still an aspect of the Nation, to reply, that all this is simply evidence of how far the prophet has pushed his personification. A whole nation has been called 'The Sick Man' even in our prosaic days. But see pp. 283 ff.



such a sufferer as suffering for his sins the just vengeance of heaven, though the minister of this vengeance was a tyrant and its means were perjury and murder. *Who upon his fate reflected that for the transgression of my people he was stricken to death!*

V. Chap. liii. 10-12. We have heard the awful tragedy. The innocent Servant was put to a violent and premature death. Public apathy closed over him and the unmarked earth of a felon's grave. It is so utter a perversion of justice, so signal a triumph of wrong over right, so final a disappearance into oblivion of the fairest life which ever lived, that men might be tempted to say, God has forsaken His own. On the contrary—so strophe v. begins—God's own will and pleasure have been in this tragedy: *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him.* The line as it thus stands in our English version has a grim, repulsive sound. But the Hebrew word has no necessary meaning of pleasure or enjoyment. All it says is, God so willed it. His purpose was in this tragedy. *Deus vult!* It is the one message which can render any pain tolerable or light up with meaning a mystery so cruel as this: *The LORD Himself had purposed to bruise His Servant, the LORD Himself had laid on him sickness* (the figure of disease according to one reading is resumed).

God's purpose in putting the Servant to death is explained in the rest of the verse. It was in order that *through his soul making a guilt-offering, he might see a seed, prolong his days, and that the purpose of the LORD might prosper by his hand.*

What is a guilt-offering? The term originally meant guilt, and is so used by a prophet contemporary to our own.<sup>1</sup> In the legislation, however, both in the Penta-

<sup>1</sup> Jer. li. 5.

teuch and in Ezekiel, it is applied to legal and sacrificial forms of restitution or reparation for guilt. It is only named in Ezekiel along with other sacrifices.<sup>1</sup> Both Numbers and Leviticus define it, but define it differently. In Numbers (v. 7, 8) it is the payment, which a transgressor has to make to the human person offended, of the amount to which he has harmed that person's property : it is what we call damages. But in Leviticus it is the ram, exacted over and above damages to the injured party (v. 14-16 ; vi. 1-7), or in cases where no damages were asked for (v. 17-19), by the priest, the representative of God, for satisfaction to His law ; and it was required even where the offender had been an unwitting one. By this guilt-offering *the priest made atonement* for the sinner and *he was forgiven*. It was for this purpose of reparation to the Deity that the plagued Philistines sent a guilt-offering back with the ark of the Lord which they had stolen.<sup>2</sup> But there is another historical passage, which though the term *guilt-offering* is not used in it, admirably illustrates the idea.<sup>3</sup> A famine in David's time was revealed to be due to the murder of certain Gibeonites by the house of Saul. David asked the Gibeonites what reparation he could make. They said it was not a matter of damages. But both parties felt that before the law of God could be satisfied and the land relieved of its curse, some atonement, some guilt-offering, must be made to the Divine Law. It was a wild kind of satisfaction that was paid. Seven men of Saul's house were hung up before the Lord in Gibeon. But the instinct, though satisfied in so murderous a fashion, was a true instinct,—the conscience of a law above all human laws and rights, to which homage must be paid before the sinner could

<sup>1</sup> xl. 39 ; xlii. 13 ; xlv. 29 ; xlv. 20.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Sam. vi. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Wellhausen's *Prolegomena*, ch. ii. 2.

come into true relations with God, or the Divine curse be removed.

It is in this sense that the word is used of the Servant of Yahweh, the Ideal, Representative Sufferer. Innocent as he is, he gives his life as satisfaction to the Divine law for the guilt of his people. His death was no mere martyrdom or miscarriage of human justice : in God's intent and purpose, but also by its own voluntary offering, it was an expiatory sacrifice.<sup>1</sup> By his death the Servant did homage to the law of God. By dying for it He made men feel that the supreme end of man was to own that law and be in a right relation to it, and that the supreme service was to help others to a right relation. As it is said a little farther down, *My Servant, righteous himself, wins righteousness for many, and makes their iniquities his load.*

It surely cannot be difficult for any one, who knows what sin is, and what a part vicarious suffering plays both in the bearing of the sin and in the redemption of the sinner, to perceive that at this point the Servant's service for God and man reaches its crown. Compare his death and its sad meaning, with the brilliant energies of his earlier career. It is a heavy and an honourable thing to come from God to men, laden with God's truth for your charge and responsibility ; but it is a far heavier to stoop and take upon your heart as your business and burden men's suffering and sin. It is a needful and a lovely thing to assist the feeble aspirations of men, to put yourself on the side of whatever in them is upward and living,—to be the shelter, as the

<sup>1</sup> There is no exegete but agrees to this. There may be differences of opinion about the syntax—whether the verse should run, *though Thou makest his soul guilt, or a guilt-offering* ; or, *though his soul make a guilt-offering* ; or (reading ישים for תשים), *if or while he makes his soul a guilt-offering*—but all agree to the fact that by himself or by God the Servant's life is offered as expiation for sin, a satisfaction to the law of God.

Servant was, of the broken reed and the flickering wick ; but it is more indispensable, and infinitely heavier, to seek to lift the deadness of men, to take their guilt upon your heart, to attempt to rouse them to it, to attempt to deliver them from it. It is a useful and a glorious thing to establish order and justice among men, to create a social conscience, to inspire the exercise of love and the habits of service, and this the Servant did when *he set Law on the Earth, and the Isles waited for his teaching* ; but after all man's supreme and controlling relation is his relation to God, and to this their *righteousness* the Servant restored guilty men by his death.

And so it was at this point, according to our prophecy, that the Servant, though brought so low, was nearest his exaltation : though in death, yet nearest life, nearest the highest kind of life, *the seeing of a seed*, the finding of himself in others ; though despised, rejected, and forgotten of men, most certain of finding a place among the great and notable forces of life,—*therefore do I grant him a share with the great, and the spoil he shall share with the strong*. Not because as a prophet he was a sharp sword in the hand of the Lord, or a light flashing to the ends of the earth, but in that—as the prophecy concludes, and it is the prophet's last and highest word concerning him—in that *he bare the sin of the many and interposed for the transgressors*.

We have seen that the most striking thing about this prophecy is the spectral appearance of the Servant. He haunts, rather than is present in, the chapter. We hear of him, but he himself does not speak. We see faces that he startles, lips that the sight of him shuts, lips that the memory of him, after he has passed

in silence, opens to bitter confession of neglect and misunderstanding ; but himself we see not. His aspect and his bearing, his work for God and his influence on men, are shown to us, through the recollection and conscience of the speakers, with a vividness and a truth that draw the consciences of us who hear into the current of the confession, and take our hearts captive. But when we ask, Who was he then ? What was his name among men ? Where shall we find himself ? Has he come, or do you still look for him ?—neither the speakers, whose conscience he so smote, nor God, whose chief purpose he was, give us here any answer. In some verses he and his work seem already to have happened upon earth, but again we are made to feel that he is still future to the prophet, and that the voices, which the prophet quotes as speaking of having seen him and found him to be the Saviour, are voices of a day not yet born, while the prophet writes.

But about five hundred and fifty years after this prophecy was written, a Man came forward among the sons of men,—among this very nation from whom the prophecy had arisen ; and in every essential of consciousness and of experience He was the counterpart, embodiment, and fulfilment of this Suffering Servant and his Service. Jesus Christ answers the questions, which the prophecy raises and leaves unanswered. In the prophecy we see one, who is only a spectre, a dream, a conscience without a voice, without a name, without a place in history. But in Jesus Christ of Nazareth the dream becomes a reality ; He, whom we have seen in this chapter only as the purpose of God, only through the eyes and conscience of a generation yet unborn,—He comes forward in flesh and blood ; He speaks, He explains Himself, He accomplishes, almost to the last



detail the work, the patience, and the death which are here described as Ideal and Representative.

The correspondence of details between Christ's life and this prophecy, published five hundred and fifty years before He came, is striking; if we encountered it for the first time, it would be more than striking, it would be staggering. But do not let us do what so many have done—so fondly exaggerate it as to lose in the details of external resemblance the moral and spiritual identity.

For the external correspondence between this prophecy and the life of Jesus Christ is by no means perfect. Every wound that is set down in the fifty-third of Isaiah was not reproduced or fulfilled in the sufferings of Jesus. For instance, Christ was not the sick, plague-stricken man, whom the Servant is at first represented to be. The English translators have masked the leprous figure, that stands out so clearly in the original Hebrew,—for *acquainted with grief, bearing our griefs, put him to grief*, we should in each case read *sickness*. Now Christ was no Job. As Matthew points out, the only way He could be said *to bear our sicknesses and to carry our pains* was by healing them, not by sharing them.

And again, exactly as the judicial murder of the Servant, and the entire absence from his contemporaries of any idea that he suffered a vicarious death, suit the case of Christ, the next stage in the Servant's fate was not true of the Victim of Pilate and the Pharisees. Christ's grave was not with the wicked. He suffered as a felon without the walls on the common place of execution, but friends received the body and gave it an honourable burial in a friend's grave. Or take the clause as it stands in the text, *with the rich in his tomb*. It is doubtful whether the word is really *rich*, and ought



not to be a closer synonym of *wicked* in the previous clause ; but if it be *rich*, it is simply another name for *the wicked*, who in the East, in cases of miscarried justice, are so often coupled with the evildoers. It cannot possibly denote such a man as Joseph of Arimathea ; nor, is it to be observed, do the Evangelists in describing Christ's burial in that rich man's tomb take any notice of this line about the Suffering Servant.

But the absence of a complete incidental correspondence only renders more striking the moral and spiritual correspondence, the essential likeness between the Service set forth in chap. liii and the work of our Lord.

The speakers of chap. liii set the Servant over against themselves, and in solitariness of character and office. They count him alone sinless where all they have sinned, and him alone the agent of salvation and healing where their whole duty is to look on and believe. But this is precisely the relation which Christ assumed between Himself and the nation. He was on one side, all they on the other. Against their strong effort to make Him the First among them, it was, as we have said before, the constant aim of our Lord to assert and to explain Himself as The Only.

And this Onlyness was to be realised in suffering. He said, *I must suffer* ; or again, *It behoves the Christ to suffer*. Suffering is the experience in which men feel their oneness with their kind. Christ, too, by suffering felt His oneness with men ; but largely in order to assert a singularity beyond. Through suffering He became like unto men, but only that He might effect through suffering a lonely and a singular service for them. For though He suffered in all points as men did, yet He shared none of their universal feelings about suffering. Pain never drew from Him either of those

two voices of guilt and of doubt. Pain never reminded Christ of His own past, nor made Him question God.

Nor did He seek pain for any end in itself. There have been men who did so ; fanatics who have gloried in pain ; superstitious minds that have fancied it to be meritorious ; men whose wounds have been as mouths to feed their pride, or to publish their fidelity to their cause. But our Lord shrank from pain ; if it had been possible He would have willed not to bear it : *Father, save Me from this hour ; Father, if it be Thy will, let this cup pass from Me.* And when He submitted and was under the agony, it was not in the feeling of it, nor in the impression it made on others, nor in the manner in which it drew men's hearts to Him, nor in the seal it set on the truth, but in something beyond it, that He found His end and satisfaction. *Jesus looked out of the travail of His soul and was satisfied.*

For, *firstly*, He knew His pain to be God's will for an end outside Himself,—*I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished ! Father, save Me from this hour, yet for this cause came I to this hour : Father, Thy will be done,*—and all opportunities to escape as temptations.

And, *secondly*, like the Servant, *Jesus dealt prudently, had the insight* which ensures success. The will of God in His suffering was no mystery to Him. He understood from the first why He was to suffer.<sup>1</sup>

The reasons He gave were the same two and in the same order as are given by our prophet for the sufferings of the Servant,—first, that fidelity to God's truth could bring with it no other fate in Israel ; <sup>2</sup> then that His death was necessary for the sins of men, and as

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Baldensperger (*Das Selbstbewusstsein Jesu*, pp. 119 ff.) on the genuineness of Christ's predictions and explanations of His sufferings.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. p. 345.

men's ransom from sin. In giving the first of these reasons for His death, Christ likened Himself to the prophets who had gone before Him in Jerusalem ; but in the second He matched Himself with no other, and no other has ever been known in this to match himself with Jesus.

When men then tell us that Christ suffered only for the sake of sympathy with His kind, or only for loyalty to the truth, we have to tell them that this was not the whole of Christ's own consciousness, this was not the whole of Christ's own explanation. Suffering, which leads men into the sense of oneness with their kind, only made Him, as it grew the nearer and weighed the heavier, more emphatic upon His difference from other men. If He Himself, by His pity, by His labours of healing (as Matthew points out), and by all His intercourse with His people, penetrated more deeply into the participation of human suffering, the very days which marked with increasing force His sympathy with men, only laid more bare their want of sympathy with Him, their incapacity to follow into that unique conscience and understanding of a Passion, which He bore not only *with*, but, as He said, *for* His brethren. *Who believed that which we heard, and to whom was the arm of Yahweh revealed ? As to His fate, who reflected . . . that for the transgression of my people He was stricken ?* Again, while Christ indeed brought truth to earth from heaven, and was for truth's sake condemned by men to die, the burden which He found waiting Him on earth, man's sin, was ever felt by Him to be a heavier burden and responsibility than the delivery of the truth ; and was in fact the thing, which, apart from the things for which men might put Him to death, remained the reason of His death in His own sight and in that of His Father. And He told men why He felt their sin

to be so heavy, because it kept them so far from God, and this was His purpose, He said, in bearing it—that He might bring us back to God ; not primarily that He might relieve us of the suffering which followed sin, though He did so relieve some when He pardoned them, but that He might restore us to right relations with God,—might, like the Servant, *make many righteous*. Now it was Christ's confidence to be able to do this, which distinguished Him from all others, upon whom has most heavily fallen the conscience of their people's sins, and who have most keenly felt the duty and commission from God of vicarious suffering. If, like Moses, one sometimes dared for love's sake to offer his life for the life of his people, none, under the conscience and pain of their people's sins, ever expressed any consciousness of thereby making their brethren righteous. On the contrary, even a Jeremiah, whose experience, as we have seen, comes so wonderfully near the picture of the Representative Sufferer in chap. liii,—even a Jeremiah feels, with the increase of his vicarious pain and conscience of guilt, only the more perplexed, only the deeper in despair, only the less able to understand God and the less hopeful to prevail with Him. But Christ was sure of His power to remove men's sins, and was never more emphatic about that power than when He most felt the weight of those sins.

And He *has seen His seed ; He has made many righteous*. We found it to be uncertain whether the penitent speakers in chap. liii understood that the Servant by coming under the physical sufferings, which were the consequences of their sins, relieved them of these consequences ; other passages in the prophecy would seem to imply, that, while the Servant's sufferings were alone valid for righteousness, they did not relieve the rest of the nation from suffering too. And

so it would be going beyond what God has given us to know, if we said that God counts the sufferings on the Cross, which were endured for our sins, as an equivalent for, or as sufficient to do away with, the sufferings which these sins bring upon our minds, our bodies, and our social relations. Substitution of this kind is neither affirmed by the penitents who speak in the fifty-third of Isaiah, nor is it an invariable or essential part of the experience of those who have found forgiveness through Christ. Every day penitents turn to God through Christ, and are assured of forgiveness, who feel no abatement in the rigour of the retribution to those laws of God, which they have offended ; like David after his forgiveness, they have to continue to bear the consequences of their sins. But dark as this side of experience undoubtedly is, only the more conspicuously against the darkness does the other side of experience shine. By *believing what they have heard*, reaching this belief through a quicker conscience and a closer study of Christ's words about His death, men, upon whom conscience by itself and sore punishment have worked in vain, have been struck into penitence, have been assured of pardon, have been brought into right relations with God, have felt all the melting and the bracing effects of the knowledge that another has suffered in their stead. Nay, let us consider this—the physical consequences of their sins may have been left to be endured by such men, for no other reason than in order to make their new relation to God more sensible to them, while they feel those consequences no longer with the feeling of penalty, but with that of chastisement and discipline. Surely nothing could serve more strongly than this to reveal the new conscience towards God that has been worked within them. This inward *righteousness* is made more plain



by the continuance of the physical and social consequences of their sins than it would have been had these consequences been removed.

Thus Christ, like the Servant, became a force in the world, inheriting in the course of Providence a *portion with the great* and *dividing the spoils of history with the strong*. As has often been said, His Cross is His Throne, and it is by His death that He has ruled the ages. Yet we must not understand this as if His Power was only or mostly shown in binding men, by gratitude for the salvation He won them, to own Him for their King. His power has been even more conspicuously proved in making His fashion of service the most fruitful and the most honoured among men. If men have ceased to turn from sickness with aversion or from weakness with contempt ; if they have learned to see in all pain some law of God, and in vicarious suffering God's most holy service ; if patience and self-sacrifice have come in any way to be a habit of human life,—the power in this change has been Christ. But because these two—to say, *Thy will be done*, and to sacrifice self—are for us men the hardest and the most unnatural of things to do, Jesus Christ, in making these a conscience and a habit upon earth, has indeed shown Himself able to divide the spoil with the strong, has indeed performed the very highest Service for Man of which man can conceive.





BOOK IV  
THE RESTORATION



## BOOK IV

WE have now reached the summit of our prophecy. It has been a long, steep ascent, and we have had very much to seek out on the way, and to extricate and solve and load ourselves with. But although a long extent of the prophecy, if we measure it by chapters, still lies before us, the end is in sight ; every difficulty has been surmounted which kept us from seeing how we were to get to it, and the rest of the way may be said to be down-hill.

To drop the figure—the Servant, his vicarious suffering and atonement for the sins of the people, form for our prophet the solution of the spiritual problem of the nation's restoration, and what he has now to do is but to fill in the details of this.

We saw that the problem of Israel's deliverance from Exile, their Return, and their Restoration to their own land as the Chief Servant of God to humanity, was a double problem—political and spiritual. The solution of the political side of it was Cyrus. As soon as the prophet had been able to make it certain that Cyrus was moving down upon Babylon, with a commission from God to take the city, and irresistible in the power with which Yahweh had invested him, the political difficulties in the way of Israel's Return were as good as removed ; and so the prophet gave, in the end of chap. xlviii, his great call to his countrymen to

depart. But all through chaps. xl–xlviii, while addressing himself to the solution of the political problems of Israel's deliverance, the prophet had given hints that there were moral and spiritual difficulties as well. In spite of their punishment for more than half a century, the mass of the people were not worthy of a return. Some were idolaters; many were worldly; the orthodox had their own wrong views of how salvation should come (xlv. 9 ff.); the pious were without either light or faith (l. 10). The nation, in short, had not that inward *righteousness*, which could alone justify God in vindicating them before the world, in establishing their outward righteousness, their salvation, and reinstatement in their lofty place and calling as His people. These moral difficulties come upon the prophet with greater force after he has, with the close of chap. xlviii, finished his solution of the political ones. To these moral difficulties he addresses himself in xlix–liii, and the Servant and his Service are his solution of them:—the Servant as a Prophet and a Covenant of the People in chap. xlix and in chap. l. 4 ff.; the Servant as an example to the people, chap. l. ff.; and finally the Servant as a full expiation for the people's sins in chap. lii. 13–liii. It is the Servant who is to *raise up the land, and to bring back the heirs to the desolate heritages*, and rouse the Israel who are not willing to leave Babylon, *saying to the bound, Go forth; and to them that sit in darkness, Show yourselves* (xlix. 8, 9). It is he who is to *sustain the weary* and to comfort the pious in Israel, who, though pious, have no light, as they walk on their way back (l. 4, 10). It is the Servant finally who is to achieve the main problem of all and *make many righteous* (liii. 11). The hope of restoration, the certainty of the people's redemption, the certainty of the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the certainty

of the growth of the people to a great multitude, are, therefore, all woven by the prophet through and through with his studies of the Servant's work in xlix, l, and lii. 13–liii,—woven so closely and so naturally that, as we have already seen (pp. 18 ff., 351 ff.), we cannot take any part of chaps. xlix–liii and say that it is of different authorship from the rest. Thus in chap. xlix we have the road to Jerusalem pictured in vv. 9b–13, immediately upon the back of the Servant's call to go forth in ver. 9a. We have then the assurance of Şion being rebuilt and thronged by her children in vv. 14–23, and another affirmation of the certainty of redemption in vv. 24–26. In l. 1–3 this is repeated. In li–lii. 12 the petty people is assured that it shall grow innumerable again; new affirmations are made of its ransom and return, ending with the beautiful prospect of the feet of the heralds of deliverance on the mountains of Judah (lii. 7) and a renewed call to leave Babylon (vv. 11, 12). We shall treat all these passages in our Twenty-First Chapter.

And as they started naturally from the Servant's work in xlix. 1–9a and his example in l. 4–11, so upon his final and crowning work in chap. liii there follow as naturally chap. liv (the prospect of *the seed* that liii. 10 promised he should see), and chap. lv (a new call to come forth). These two, with the little prophecy, chap. lvi. 1–8, we shall treat in our Twenty-Second Chapter.

Then come the series of difficult small prophecies from lvi. 9 to lix. They will occupy our Twenty-Third Chapter. In chap. lx Şion is at last not only in sight, but radiant in the rising of her new day of glory. In chaps. lxi and lxii the prophet, having reached Şion, 'looks back,' as Dillmann well remarks, 'upon what has become his task, and in connection with that makes



clear once more the high goal of all his working and striving.' In lxiii. 1-6 the Divine Deliverer is hailed. We shall take lx-lxiii. 6 together in our Twenty-Fourth Chapter.

Chap. lxiii. 7-lxiv is an Intercessory Prayer for the restoration of *all* Israel. An answer is given in chap. lxv, and the lesson of this answer, that Israel must be judged, and that all cannot be saved, is enforced in chap. lxvi. Chaps. lxiii. 7-lxvi will therefore form our Twenty-Fifth and closing Chapter.

Thus our course is clear, and we can overtake it rapidly. It is, to a large extent, a series of spectacles, interrupted by exhortations upon duty; things, in fact, to see and to hear, not to argue about. There are few great doctrinal questions, except such as we have already sufficiently discussed; our study, for instance, of the term righteousness we shall find has covered for us a large part of the ground in advance. And the only difficult literary question is that of the uncertain dates of so many of the pieces, which form so large a part of chaps. lvi-lix and lxiii-lxvi.

## CHAPTER XXI

### DOUBTS IN THE WAY

ISAIAH XLIX-LII. 12

CHAPTERS xlix-liii are, as we have seen, a series of more or less closely joined passages, in which the prophet, having made certain the political redemption of Israel through Cyrus, and having dismissed Cyrus from his thoughts, addresses himself to various difficulties in the way of restoration, chiefly moral and spiritual, and rising from Israel's own feelings and character ; exhorts the people in face of them by Yahweh's faithfulness and power ; but finds the chief solution of them in the Servant and his prophetic and expiatory work. We have studied such of these passages as present the Servant to us, and we now take up those others, which meet the doubts and difficulties in the way of restoration by means of general considerations drawn from God's character and power. Let it be noticed that, with one exception (chap. l. 11),<sup>1</sup> these passages are meant for earnest and pious minds in Israel,—for those Israelites, whose desires are towards Sion, but chill and heavy with doubts.

The form and the terms of these passages are in harmony with their purpose. They are a series of short, high-pitched exhortations, apostrophes and lyrics. One, chap. li. 9-12, calls upon the arm of Yahweh,

<sup>1</sup> See p. 350.

but the rest address *Ṣion*,—that is, the ideal people in the person of their mother, with whom they ever so fondly identified themselves ; or *Ṣion's children* ; or *them that follow righteousness*, or *ye that know righteousness* ; or *my people, my nation* ; or again *Ṣion* herself. This personification of the people under the name of their city, and under the aspect of a woman, whose children are the individual members of the people, will be before us till the end of our prophecy. It is, of course, a personification of Israel, which is complementary to Israel's other personification under the name of the Servant. The Servant is Israel active, comforting, serving his own members and the nations ; *Ṣion*, the Mother-City, is Israel passive, to be comforted, to be served by her own sons and by the kings of the peoples.

We may divide the passages into two groups. *First*, the songs of return, which rise out of the picture of the Servant and his redemption of the people in chap. xlix. 9*b*, with the long promise and exhortation to *Ṣion* and her children, that lasts till the second picture of the Servant in chap. l. 4–10 ; and *second*, the short pieces which lie between the second picture of the Servant and the third, or from the beginning of chap. li to chap. lii. 12.

## I

In chap. xlix. 9*b* God's promise of the return of the redeemed proceeds naturally from that of their ransom by the Servant. It is hailed by a song in ver. 13, and the rest of the section is the answer to three doubts, which, like sobs, interrupt the music. But the prophecy, stooping, as it were, to kiss the trembling lips through which these doubts break, immediately resumes its high flight of comfort and promise. Two of

these doubts are: ver. 14, *But Sion hath said, Yahweh hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me*; and ver. 24, *Shall the prey be taken from the mighty or the captives of the terrible be delivered?* The third is implied in chap. l. 1.

After the proclamation of the Servant as saying to the bound, *Go forth to those who are in darkness, Appear* (xlix. 9a, see p. 332), the promise of their return proceeds as follows:—

- xlix. 9b. *Food shall they find on every<sup>1</sup> road,  
On all bare heights pasture be theirs,  
10. Nor shall they hunger, nor shall they thirst,  
Neither sirrocco<sup>1</sup> nor sun shall smite them.*

*For He who pitieth, He shall lead, them,  
He shall guide them by springs of water.*

11. *And all the<sup>2</sup> mountains I will make a road,  
And My highways, they shall be raised.*

12. *Lo these! From afar they come,  
[And these from the end of the earth]<sup>3</sup>  
Lo these from the North<sup>4</sup> and the West  
And these from the Syenites'<sup>5</sup> land.*

13. *Ring out ye heavens, exult O earth,  
O ye hills break forth into singing,  
For Yahweh hath comforted His folk,  
And on His afflicted hath pity.*

<sup>1</sup> So LXX.

<sup>2</sup> So Targ. and Syr.; Heb. has *My*.

<sup>3</sup> Cheyne suggests the addition of this line to fill up the quatrain.

<sup>4</sup> Missing in some LXX codd. and deleted by several moderns.

<sup>5</sup> Changing סִינִים of the Heb. text (by adding one letter) to סוּיִנִים; cf. Ezek. xxix. 10, xxx. 6. The *Syenites' land* is southern Egypt (cf. Aswan) here for the whole *South*. Against the old theory that Sinim = the Chinese, see Terrien de la Couperie, *Babylonian and Oriental Record*, Sept. 1887, 183; Cheyne, *Introd.*, 275.

Do not let us take all this as the promise of a merely material miracle. It is the greater glory of a spiritual one, as the prophet indicates in describing its cause—*For He who pitieth them He shall lead them.* The desert may not abate its immemorial rigours; in itself the way may still be as hard as when the discredited and heart-broken exiles were driven down it from home to servitude. But their hearts are now changed, and that shall change the road. The new faith, which has made the difference, is a simple one, that God is Power and God is Love. Notice the possessive pronouns used by God, and mark what they put into His possession—powerful things, *I will make all the mountains a way*; and sorrowful things, *Yahweh hath comforted His people, and will have compassion on His afflicted*.<sup>1</sup> If we will steadfastly believe that everything in the world which is in pain, and everything which has power, is God's, and shall be used by Him, the one for the sake of the other, this shall surely change the way to our feet, and all the world to our eyes.

1. Only it is so impossible to believe it when one looks at facts, and however far and swiftly faith and hope may carry us for a time, we always come to ground again and face to face with fact. The prophet's imagination speeding along that green and lifted highway of the Lord lights suddenly upon the end of it,—the still dismantled and desolate city. Fifty years Sion's altar fires have been cold and her walls in ruin. Fifty years she has been bereaved of her children and left alone. The prophet hears the winds blow mournfully through her fact's chill answer to faith. *But Sion said, Yahweh hath left me.* Let us remember, that our

<sup>1</sup> *His humbled, His poor* in the exile sense of the word. *Isaiah i-xxxix*, pp. 449 ff.

prophet has Sion before him in the figure of a mother, and we shall feel the force of God's reply. It is to a mother's heart God appeals. *Can a woman forget her sucking child nor pity the son of her womb? yea, such may forget, but I will not forget thee*, desolate mother that thou art!<sup>1</sup> Thy life is not what thou art in outward show and feeling, but what thou art in My love and in My sight. *Lo, upon both palms have I graven thee; thy walls are ever before Me.* The custom, which to some extent prevails in all nations, of puncturing or tattooing upon the skin a dear name one wishes to keep in mind, is followed in the East chiefly for religious purposes, and men engrave the name of God or some holy text upon the hand or arm for a memorial or as a mark of consecration. This fashion, though forbidden by the Law, God attributes to Himself. Having measured His love by the love of a mother, He gives this second human pledge for His memory and devotion. But again He exceeds the human habit; for it is not only the name of Sion which is engraved on His hands, but her picture—not her picture, as she lies in her present ruin and solitariness, but her restored and perfect state: *thy walls are continually before Me.* For this is faith's answer to all the ruin and haggard contradiction of outward fact. Reality is not what we see: reality is what God sees. What a thing is in His sight and to His purpose, that it really is, and that it shall ultimately appear to men's eyes. To make us believe this is the greatest service the Divine can do for the human. It was the service Christ was always doing, and nothing showed His divinity more. He took us men and He called us, unworthy as we were, His brethren, the sons of God.

<sup>1</sup> On the Motherhood of God, cf. *Isaiah i-xxxix*, pp. 251 ff.



He took such an one as Simon, shifting and unstable, a quicksand of a man, and He said, *On this rock I will build My Church*. A man's reality is not what he is in his own feelings, or what he is to the world's eyes ; but what he is to God's love, to God's yearning, and in God's plan. If he believe that, so in the end shall he feel it, so in the end shall he show it to the eyes of the world.

Upon those great thoughts, that God's are all strong things and all weak things, and that the real and the certain in life is His will, the prophecy breaks into a vision of multitudes in motion. There is a great stirring and rush ; and Sion—so bereft of her former generations that she deems herself childless and alone—sees new children throng to her, telling that her land is now too strait for them.

All this is poured forth in lines of deep and tender emotion, which by contrast recall the scornful taunt-song on that other city, Babylon (chap. xlvii). The text, syntax, and division into lines are sometimes uncertain, so much so, indeed, that some translators cautiously print several verses as prose.<sup>1</sup> In vv. 14-18 the rhythm approaches that of the *Kinah*, which becomes more regular in 19-21.

- xlix. 14. *But Sion said, Yahweh hath left me,  
My Lord hath forgot me !*  
15. *Can a woman forget her suckling,  
Nor pity the son of her womb ?  
Yea, even if such should forget  
Yet never forget thee shall I.*  
16. *Lo, on my <sup>2</sup> palms I have thee engraved,  
Thy walls they are ever before Me.*

<sup>1</sup> So Cheyne, vv. 16-18.

<sup>2</sup> So LXX.

17. *More quick are thy builders<sup>1</sup> than they who  
have wrecked thee,  
And thy wasters clear out of thee.*
18. *Lift up thine eyes round about,  
See all of them gathered.  
They are come to thee, sure as I live,  
—'Tis the Rede of Yahweh—  
That them all thou should'st wear as an orna-  
ment,  
And fasten them on like a bride ;<sup>2</sup>*
19. *That thy waste and desolate places,  
And the land of thy ruin,<sup>3</sup>  
Be now too strait for its dwellers,  
And they who devoured thee be far.*
20. *Yet again shall say in thine ears  
The sons of thy bereavement :<sup>4</sup>  
Too strait is the place for me,  
Draw closer<sup>5</sup> that I may dwell.*
21. *Then thou shalt say in thine heart,  
Who hath borne me these ?  
Me the childless and barren,<sup>6</sup>  
And these who hath reared ?  
Lo, I was left all alone,  
And these from whence are they ?<sup>7</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> So after the LXX, Targ. and Cod. Bab., reading with most moderns since Lowth *bonaikk* instead of the *banaikk* (*thy sons*) of the Received Text.

<sup>2</sup> Budde after the LXX : 'like the jewels of a bride.'

<sup>3</sup> Duhm and others suppose two couplets to be missing after this ; which might have rendered the syntax less doubtful than it is.

<sup>4</sup> That is, the sons born in exile. A.V. : The children thou shalt have after thou hast lost the other.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Gen. xix. 9. Duhm : *rücke mir*.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. adds *exiled and put away*, but these words are not appropriate to Sion herself, and as not found in LXX are probably a late gloss.

<sup>7</sup> Some would read *and these who then are they ?*

xlix. 22. *Thus saith the Lord Yahweh :*

*Lo, I lift up My hand to the nations,  
And to the peoples I raise My signal ;  
They shall bring thy sons in the bosom,  
And thy daughters on the shoulder shall be  
borne.*

23. *And kings shall become thy guardians  
And their queens thy foster-mothers ;  
Faces to earth they shall do thee reverence,  
And the dust of thy feet shall they lick.<sup>1</sup>  
Then shalt thou know that I am Yahweh,  
On whom they that wait shall never be shamed.*

2. The first great Doubt in the Way being now answered by Yahweh's own oath and His assurance that those who trust Him shall not be disappointed, we pass to the second Doubt, in ver. 24. Even though God be full of love and thought for Sion, will the tyrants who hold her children captive give them up? God Himself answers this doubt in vv. 25, 26.

24. *Can there be taken from the mighty his prey,  
Or the captives of the tyrant <sup>2</sup> be rescued ?*

<sup>1</sup> Some omit the first four lines of ver. 23 as due to the spirit of later Judaism, but surely this does not apply to the first two lines.

<sup>2</sup> So Syr., Vulg., and most moderns, conformably with *the tyrant* in the next couplet. Heb. reads *righteous*, hardly possible here save in the meaning chs. xl–xlviii sometimes put on the root of *successful* or *victorious*. Dillmann retains *righteous*, takes it and *mighty* as used of God Himself, and reads the question not as one of despair from Sion herself, but as a triumphant challenge from the prophet or from God Himself. He would then see the next verse run thus : *Nay, for the captives of the mighty may be taken and the prey of the tyrant delivered, but with him who strives with thee I will strive*. Similarly others who, following Duhm transfer to before it the words *Thus saith Yahweh* at the beginning of ver. 25.

25. *Thus saith Yahweh :*

*Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken  
from him,*

*And the prey of the tyrant be rescued ;*

*With him that striveth with thee I strive,<sup>1</sup>*

*And thy sons I Myself will save.*

26. *[I will make thine oppressors eat their own flesh,  
And with their blood as sweet wine shall they be  
drunken] <sup>2</sup>*

*Then all flesh shall know*

*That I Yahweh, I am thy Saviour*

*And thy Redeemer the Mighty of Jacob.*

3. But now a third Doubt in the Way appears to have risen. Unlike the two others, it is not directly stated, but we may gather its substance from the reply which the Lord makes to it (l. 1). This, addressed not to Sion but to Israelites, assumes that they had been thinking of His dismissal of Israel or abandonment of Sion as an irrevocable divorce and a bankrupt's sale of His children into slavery.

1. 1. *Thus saith Yahweh :*

*Where then is the bill of divorce,*

*Your Mother's with which I dismissed her ?*

*Or which of My creditors is it*

*To whom I have sold you ?*

The most characteristic effect of sin is that it is always reminding men of law. Whether the moral habit of it be upon them or they are entangled in its material consequences, sin breeds in men the conscience of

<sup>1</sup> LXX *thy cause will I plead* ; and so Duhm, Marti, Box.

<sup>2</sup> This couplet seems to me nearer to the spirit of the later Judaism than to that of our prophet.

inexorable, irrevocable law. Its effect is not only practical, but intellectual. Sin not only robs a man of the freedom of his own will, but it takes from him the power to think of freedom in others, and it does not stop till it paralyses his belief in the freedom of God. He, who feels himself as the creature of unchangeable habits or as the victim of pitiless laws, cannot help imputing his own experience to what is beyond him, till all life seems strictly lawbound, the idea of a free agent anywhere an impossibility, and God but a part of the necessity which rules the universe.

Now the generation of the Exile was a generation to whom God had revealed Himself as law. They were a generation of convicts. They had owned the justice of the sentence which had banished and enslaved them ; they had experienced how inexorably God's processes of judgement sweep down the ages ; for fifty years they had been feeling the inevitable consequences of sin. The conscience of Law, which this experience was bound to create in them, grew ever more strong, till at last it absorbed even the hope of redemption, and the God, who enforced the Law, Himself seemed to be forced by it. To express this sense of law these earnest Israelites—for though in error they were in earnest—went to the only kind of law, with which they were familiar, and borrowed from it two of its forms, which were not only suggested to them by the relations in which the nation and the nation's sons respectively stood to their God, as wife and as children, but admirably illustrated the ideas they wished to express. There was, first, the form of divorce, so expressive of the ideas of absoluteness, deliberateness, and finality ;—of absoluteness, for throughout the East power of divorce rests entirely with the husband ; of deliberateness, for in order to prevent hasty divorce the Hebrew law insisted

that the husband must make a bill or writing of divorce instead of only speaking dismissal; and of finality, for such a writing, in contrast to the spoken dismissal, set the divorce beyond recall.<sup>1</sup> The other form, which the doubters borrowed from their law, was one, which, while it also illustrated the irrevocableness of the act, emphasised the helplessness of the agent,—the act of the father, who put his children away, not as the husband put his wife in his anger, but in his necessity, selling them to pay his debts and because he was bankrupt.

On such doubts God turns with their own language, ‘I have indeed put your mother away, but *where is the bill* that makes her divorce final, beyond recall? You indeed were sold, but was it because I was bankrupt? *To which*, then, of *My creditors* (note the scorn of the plural) *was it that I sold you?*

1. 1. *Lo, for your own iniquities were ye sold,  
And for your crimes was your mother dismissed.*

But I am bound by no law. I stand here as ready as ever to save, I by Myself.

2. *Why when I came was there no man?  
I called, there was none to answer.  
Is My hand too short at all to redeem  
And in Me is there no strength to rescue?*

And so we come back to the truth, which these prophecies so often present to us, that behind all dogmas and laws, behind all facts and forces there is a personal initiative and urgency of infinite might, which moves

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xxiv. 1-4.



freely of its own compassion and power, is hindered by no law, and needs no man's co-operation in order to effect its purpose. The rest of the Lord's answer to His people's fear that he is bound by inexorable law, is an appeal to His wealth of force. The Omnipotence of God is to our prophet as it was to Paul in his argument for the Resurrection, the solution of the problems which arise, and he expresses it in his favourite figures of physical changes and sudden reversions of the normal course of nature.

*Lo, with My rebuke I dry up the sea,  
I turn the rivers to desert.  
Parched<sup>1</sup> are their fish for want of water,  
And<sup>2</sup> die of thirst.*

1. 3. *I clothe the heavens in mourning,  
And sackcloth I make their covering.*

The argument seems to be that if God can work those sudden revolutions in the physical world, those apparent interruptions of law in that sphere, surely you can believe Him capable of creating sudden revolutions also in the sphere of history, and reversing those laws and processes, which you feel to be unalterable. It is an argument from the physical to the moral world, in our prophet's own analogical style, and like those we found in chap. xl.

## II. li-lii. 12

Passing over the passage on the Servant, chap. l. 4-11 (of which we have already treated, pp. 342-349), we

<sup>1</sup> So LXX; Heb. has *stink* or *rot*.

<sup>2</sup> Duhm, Budde, Cheyne, Box feel that the line needs another word, and insert here *their beasts* or *monsters*; and some change the rest of the line to *on thirsty land*.

reach a second series of exhortations in face of Doubts in the Way of the Return, li. 1-8, three unequal strophes in close approach to the *Ḳinah* measure. The first of these is li. 1-3.

- li. 1. *Hearken to Me, ye who press for a righting,<sup>1</sup>  
 Petitioning Yahweh,  
 Look at the rock out of which ye were hewn  
 And the quarry whence ye were dug :*
2. *Look ye at Abraham your father.  
 And at Sarah who bore you ;  
 For he was but one when I called him,  
 And I blessed and made of him many.*
3. *So Yahweh hath <sup>2</sup> comforted Ṣion,  
 Comforted all her wastes,  
 Hath made her moorland like Eden,  
 And her desert as the garden of Yahweh.  
 Rejoicing and mirth are found throughout her,  
 Giving of thanks and the voice of song.*

Their doubts of God's mindfulness and His power to save being answered, the loyal Israelites fall back on doubts about themselves. They see how few are ready for the freedom awaiting the nation, and on how small a group its future depends. But they do not make their disappointment a reason for deserting the purpose of their God ; their fewness makes them the more faithful and drives them the more to seek Himself. Therefore God speaks to them kindly : *Ye who press for a righting, petitioning Yahweh.* Our Versions render, *ye that follow after righteousness* ; which term might be taken in its inward sense of *rightness* of character.

<sup>1</sup> Or *vindication*.

<sup>2</sup> The perfects in this and the following lines are, of course, prophetic perfects.

Those addressed would then be such in Israel as in face of unpromising prospects applied themselves to virtue and religion. But the Hebrew *sedheḳ* in ver. 1 (as later in 5, 6) is much more probably used in the objective sense which we have found prevalent in 'Second Isaiah,' of vindication: the *righting* or *coming to their rights* of God's people and God's cause in the world, their justification and triumph in history.<sup>1</sup> They who are addressed will then be they who, in spite of their fewness, believe in this triumph, *follow it*, make it their goal and their aim, and *seek Yahweh*, knowing that He can bring it to pass. And because, in spite of their doubts, they are still earnest, and though faint are yet pursuing, God speaks to comfort them about their fewness. Their present state may be very small and unpromising, but let them look back upon the much more unpromising character of their origin: *look unto the rock whence ye were hewn, and the quarry whence ye were digged*. To-day you may be a mere handful, ridiculous in the light of the destiny you are called to achieve, but remember you were once but one man: *look unto Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bare you: for as one I called him and blessed him, and made of him many*.

When we are weary and hopeless it is best to sit down and remember. Is the future dark: let us look back and see the gathering and impetus of the past! We can follow the luminous track, the unmistakable increase and progress, but the most inspiring sight of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. pp. 237 f. Dillmann's view that *righteousness* means here personal character is contradicted by the context, which makes plain that it is something external, the realisation of which those addressed are doubting. What troubles them is not that they are personally unrighteous, but that they are so few and insignificant. And what God promises them in answer is something external, the establishment of *Ṣion*. Cf. also the external meaning of *righteousness* in vv. 5, 6.

all is what God makes of the individual heart ; how a man's heart is always His beginning, the fountain of the future, the origin of nations. Lift up your hearts, ye few and feeble ; your father was but one when I called him, and I made him many !

Having thus assured His loyal remnant of the restoration of Sion, in spite of their fewness, their God in the next two strophes (4-8) extends His light and His judgements over the world.

- li. 4. *Give heed unto Me, O My people,  
My folk give Me ear :  
Instruction <sup>1</sup> proceeds from Me,  
And My Law <sup>1</sup> is for light to the peoples.*
5. *In a moment <sup>2</sup> I will bring near My righting,  
My salvation goes forth,  
And mine arms shall judge the peoples—  
The isles for Me are waiting,  
[For Mine arm they hope.] <sup>3</sup>*
6. *Lift to the heavens your eyes,  
And look to the earth below,  
For the heavens like smoke shall scatter <sup>4</sup>  
And the earth wear out like a garment  
[And her dwellers die off like gnats.] <sup>5</sup>  
But for ever shall be My salvation,  
And My righting never shall fail.*

<sup>1</sup> *Instruction or direction, Torah ; Law, Mishpat.*

<sup>2</sup> *Lit. in a twinkple, or, as we rather say, in a flash ; with many moderns, after LXX I have brought this phrase into this verse from the end of the preceding.*

<sup>3</sup> *Some omit this line as superfluous to the metre.*

<sup>4</sup> *Some, unnecessarily I think, read be made powder by the moth in order to conform the figure to the next line ; so Cheyne and Box.*

<sup>5</sup> *This line also some omit as superfluous ; as gnats, so some after Weir.*

li. 7. *Hearken to Me ye that know what is right,<sup>1</sup>  
 Folk in whose heart is My Law,  
 Fear ye not the reproach of men  
 Nor tremble at their revilings.*

8. *For like a garment the moth shall devour them  
 And like wool the worm.  
 But My righting shall be for ever  
 My salvation to all generations.*

Between them *Instruction* and *Law* or *Religion* (4) summarise God's revelation. As He identified them with the Servant's work (xl. 11), so here He tells the loyal in Israel, who in one aspect were His Servant, that they shall surely go forth; and He exhorts the loyal in vv. 7, 8 to be as fearless as the Servant has shown himself to be (l. 7-9). By some this is taken as proof that the Servant and the loyal remnant are virtually one and the same. But we have seen (in l. 10) the loyal or god-fearing addressed as distinct from the Servant, and can understand here that they are exhorted to take Him as an example. But at least this passage is an indication that both itself and that other, are most probably due to the same author.

When such Doubts in the Way have been removed what remains but a great impatience to see achieved at once the near Salvation? To this the loosened hearts give voice through the prophet in vv. 9-11. Though the text is here and there uncertain, the metre at least in vv. 9, 10 is again surely that of the *Kinah*.

9. *Awake, awake, put on strength  
 O arm of Yahweh,  
 Awake as in days of old,  
 Generations far past.*

<sup>1</sup> Here the Heb. *sedhek* is used undoubtedly in its subjective sense.

- Art thou not it that shattered* <sup>1</sup> *Rahab,*  
*That pierced the Dragon ?*
10. *Art thou not it that dried up the Sea,*  
*The Great Deep's waters.* <sup>2</sup>  
*That turned the depths of the Sea to a way*  
*For the passage of the redeemed.*
11. *And the ransomed of Yahweh return,*  
*And come to Sion with shouting,*  
*With joy evermore on their heads ;*  
*Gladness and joy overtake them,*  
*And fled are sorrow and sighing.* <sup>3</sup>

The traditions appealed to are twofold and kindred—one mythical, God's victory over chaos and the turbulent ocean, and one historical, the passage He made through the Red Sea for His people liberated from Egypt. The prophet mingles the two, for *Rahab* was the prophet's nickname for Egypt.<sup>4</sup>

To His peoples' challenge, their God replies with a remonstrance (vv. 12–16), in a strain similar to that of chap. xl. 21 ff. The text in parts is uncertain ; and so is the division into lines. Verses 12, 13 could be arranged in the *Kinah* measure, but it seems better to read them in longer lines uniformly with the lines in vv. 14–16. The authenticity of the passage in whole or in part has been disputed, but I agree with Professor Budde that we have still here the hand of the prophet of chaps. xl–xlviii, 'the Second Isaiah' ; though the second line of ver. 15 may be an intrusion.

<sup>1</sup> So Vulg. as in Job xxvi. 12 ; here the text has *hewed in pieces*.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *Têhôm Rabbah*, the Babylonian synonym *Tiāmat*.

<sup>3</sup> Ver. 11 is the same as xxxv. 10, and regarded by many as quoted from that. The metre differs from vv. 9, 10.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Job vii. 12, xxvi. 12 ; Ps. lxxxix. 10 f. ; and see Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos*, 30–32.



It is not clear whether the passage implies the fall of Babylon to have taken place or as still imminent.

- li. 12. *I, I am He Who comforteth thee.*<sup>1</sup>  
*Who art thou that thou fearest* <sup>2</sup> *man who is mortal*  
*And the children of men given up as the grass ;*
13. *And hast forgotten Yahweh, thy Maker*  
*Who stretched out the heavens and founded the*  
*earth,*  
*And hast trembled ever and all the day*  
*Before the brute force of the oppressor*  
*As he made ready to crush thee* <sup>3</sup> —  
*Where now is the oppressor's brute force ?*
14. *The cowering slave hastes to be loosed*  
*Nor dies down to the pit, nor fails his bread.*<sup>4</sup>
15. *And I am Yahweh thy God,*  
*(Who stir the sea till its billows roar)*  
*Yahweh of Hosts is My* <sup>5</sup> *Name.*
16. *I have set My Words in thy mouth*  
*In the shade of My Hand have I hid thee,*  
*Stretching* <sup>6</sup> *the heavens and founding the earth*  
*And saying to Sion, My people art thou !*

Of the impressions which this passage leaves, two in particular must be noted. *First*, the manner, in which it uses of Israel, personified as Sion, words already used of the Servant, warns us of the impossibility of breaking up 'Second Isaiah' into two sets of poems

<sup>1</sup> So LXX conformably with *thou* of the next line. Heb. *you* which, if original, illustrates the fluctuation of the prophet's vision between the people Israel and their mother Sion.

<sup>2</sup> So literally the Heb. ; others, *how is it that thou wast afraid ?*

<sup>3</sup> So LXX.

<sup>4</sup> Text uncertain ; LXX is shorter. Cheyne reads another long line here : *deliverance will hasten not tarry nor linger.*

<sup>5</sup> So LXX ; Heb. *his*.

<sup>6</sup> So, by change of a letter, most moderns ; Heb. *planting*.

by different hands, the respective subjects of which are one or other of these two personifications of the people.<sup>1</sup> And *second*, it is striking how the restoration of Sion is emphasised by the last verse as though it were the cardinal moment or the climax of a universal regeneration, a new stretching of the heavens and founding of the earth.

### III. li. 17–lii. 12

But the desire of the prophet speeds on before the returning exiles to the still prostrate and desolate City. He sees her as she fell and still drugged by the cup of the wrath of the Lord, and urgently rouses her now by the tale of her ruin now by exulting in the vengeance the Lord prepares for His enemies (li. 17–23). In a second strophe he addresses her again in conscious contrast to his taunt song on Babel, throneless and cast to the dust, while Sion, shaking off the dust, shall arise and assume her former seat (lii. 1–6). Through these two strophes the strength of the passion, the intolerance of further captivity, the fierce exultation in vengeance are very remarkable. But from the ruin of his City, which has so stirred his passion, the prophet lifts his hot eyes to the dear, clear hills that encircle her; and peace takes the music from vengeance. Often has Jerusalem seen emerge on that high horizon the spears and banners of her destroyers. But now the lofty skyline is the alighting place of hope. Fit threshold for so Divine an arrival, it lifts against heaven the figure, dilated and beautiful of the herald of the Lord's peace, *that publisheth salvation*. The city of the prophets shall be thronged by the prophets again, *and they shall see eye to eye*, looking each other

<sup>1</sup>See p. 398:

in the face. For this is the sense of the Hebrew, and not that of reconciliation and agreement which the phrase has come to have in English. The Exile had scattered and driven them into hiding. They had been only voices to one another, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel with the desert between them, or like this prophet, anonymous, unseen. But upon the old gathering-ground, the free and open platform of Jerusalem's public life, they should see each other face to face, again named and known. And so after calling on Jerusalem to exult, the prophet, having finished his long argument and dispelling the doubts that still lingered at its close, repeats in face of so open a way and so unclouded a prospect, and with greater strength than before the call to leave Babylon. All this in the third strophe, lii. 7-12.

For the most part the text readily falls into the Kīnah measure: the exceptions are: li. 18 (perhaps a later intrusion), and lii. 3-6.

## I

li. 17. *Arouse thee, arouse thee  
Stand up, Jerusalem !  
Who hast drunken at Yahweh's hand  
The cup of His fury,  
Of reeling the cup, the goblet of fury*<sup>1</sup>  
*Thou hast drunk, thou hast drained !*

18. *[No leader was hers  
Out of all the sons she had borne,  
And none to take hold of her hand  
Out of all the sons she had reared.]*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> So LXX; Heb. *the goblet cup of reeling*. Most moderns omit *cup* as a gloss on *goblet*, but this leaves the line too short; LXX makes it up.

<sup>2</sup> Ver. 18, both as changing the metre and as interrupting the direct address to the city, is taken by most moderns as an intrusion, probably rightly.

19. *Twain were the things that befel thee—  
Who may bemoan thee ?—  
Wracking and Ruin, Want and War—  
Who <sup>1</sup> will thee comfort ?*
20. *Thy sons they swooned, they dropped <sup>2</sup>  
Like antelopes netted.  
They are filled with the fury of Yahweh  
The bitter blame of thy God.*
21. *Therefore hear this, O afflicted,  
Drunken but not with wine,*
22. *Thus sayeth Yahweh thy God <sup>3</sup>  
Whose cause is His people :  
Lo from thy hand have I taken  
Of reeling the cup.  
The bowl of My fury no more  
Again shalt thou drink,*
23. *Into the hands of thy torturers I turn it  
And thine oppressors ; <sup>4</sup>  
Who have said to thy soul, ' Bend down  
That we may pass over,'  
And thy neck thou did'st set as the ground  
As a street for the passers.*

## 2

- lii. i. *Awake, awake, put on  
Thy strength, O Sion.  
Put on thy robes <sup>5</sup> of state,  
Jerusalem, Holy City.*

<sup>1</sup> LXX, Syr., Targ. Vulg. and most moderns since Lowth ; Heb. *how shall I ?*

<sup>2</sup> Heb. adds *at the top of all streets*, which disturbs both the figure and the metre, and is probably an intruded echo of Lam. ii, 19, iv. 1.

<sup>3</sup> So LXX ; Heb. has *thy Lord* before *Yahweh*.

<sup>4</sup> This couplet, defective in Heb., is fully implied in LXX.

<sup>5</sup> LXX omits *thy robes* ; so Budde, who supplies the place by transferring *Jerusalem* from the next line. He also reads *ornament* for *strength* in the preceding line.

*No more shall there come within thee*

<sup>1</sup> *Uncircumcised or unclean.*

lii. 2. *Shake off the dust, stand up*

*O captive Jerusalem.*

*The bands on thy neck loose themselves,*

*Captive daughter of Sion.*

3. *For thus sayeth Yahweh :*

*For nought were ye sold*

*And not for money shall ye be redeemed.*

4. <sup>2</sup> *Yea thus sayeth the Lord Yahweh :*

*To Egypt My people went down at first,<sup>3</sup>*

*And Assyria rudely oppressed them.*

5. *Now what have I here<sup>4</sup>—Rede of Yahweh—*

*That My folk are taken for nought ?*

*And their rulers exult<sup>5</sup>—Rede of Yahweh—*

*And ever all day My Name is despised.*

6. *Therefore My folk shall know My Name,*

*That day I am He who speaks, Behold Me !*

### 3

7. *How beautiful are on the mountains<sup>6</sup>*

*The feet of the bringer of tidings,*

*Proclaiming peace, bringing tidings of good,*

*Proclaiming salvation.*

*Saying to Sion . . .<sup>7</sup>*

*Reigneth thy God.*

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *again*, which is superfluous both to metre and sense.

<sup>2</sup> The *Kinah* measure is here replaced by another down to the end of ver. 6, and some, indeed, take all vv. 3-6 as prose.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *adds to sojourn there.*

<sup>4</sup> The Babylonian captivity.

<sup>5</sup> So Targ. ; Heb. *make them howl.*

<sup>6</sup> The proposed reading, *Lo, over the mountains hasten*, is both unfounded and unnecessary.

<sup>7</sup> The defect in this line Budde, followed by others, proposes to fill up by *thy Redeemer is come.*

8. *Thy watchmen all <sup>1</sup> lift up the voice,  
Together they sing ;  
For eye to eye do they see  
When Yahweh returns to Sion.*
9. *Break forth and sing out together,  
O wastes of Jerusalem.  
For Yahweh hath comforted His people,  
Ransomed Jerusalem.*
10. *Yahweh hath bared His Holy Arm  
To the eyes of all nations  
And all the ends of the earth shall see  
Our God's salvation.*
11. *Draw off, draw off, come forth from there  
Touch not the unclean !  
Forth from her midst ! Be ye clean  
Who bear the vessels of Yahweh !*
12. *For neither in haste shall ye forth  
Nor in flight go off,  
For Yahweh is going before you,  
And your rearward is Israel's God.*

<sup>1</sup> So Grätz and Marti, reading *kōl* for *kāl*.



## CHAPTER XXII

### ON THE EVE OF RETURN

ISAIAH LIV-LVI. 8

ONE of the difficult problems of our prophecy is the relation and grouping of chaps. liv-lix. It is among them that the unity of 'Second Isaiah,' which up to this point we have seen no reason to doubt, gives way. Chaps. lvi-lvii are either pre-exilic or post-exilic, and so is chap. lix. But in chaps. liv-lv we have three addresses, evidently dating from the Eve of the Return. We shall, therefore, treat them together.

#### I. THE BRIDE THE CITY (chap. liv)

We have already seen why there is no reason for the theory that chap. liv may have followed immediately on chap. lii. 12.<sup>1</sup> And from Calvin to Ewald and Dillmann, critics have all felt a close connection between chap. lii. 13-liii and chap. liv. 'After having spoken of the death of Christ,' says Calvin, 'the prophet passes on with good reason to the Church: that we may feel more deeply in ourselves what is the value and efficacy of His death.' Similar in substance, if not in language, is the opinion of the latest critics, who understand that in chap. liv the prophet intends to picture that full redemption which the Servant's work,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. pp. 351 f.  
(420)

culminating in chap. liii, could alone effect. Two key-words of chap. liii had been *a seed* and *many*. It is *the seed* and the *many* whom chap. liv. reveals. Again, there may be, in ver. 17 of chap. liv, a reference to the earlier picture of the Servant in chap. l, especially ver. 8. But this last is uncertain; and, as a point on the other side, there are the two different meanings, as well as the two different agents, of *righteousness* in chap. liii. 11, *My Servant shall make many righteous*, and in chap. liv. 17, *their righteousness which is of Me, saith Yahweh*. In the former righteousness is the inward justification; in the latter it is the external historical vindication.

In chap. liv the people of God are represented under the double figure, with which the Book of Revelation has made us familiar, of Bride and City. To imagine a Nation or a Land as the spouse of her God is a natural religious instinct; the land deriving her fruitfulness, the nation her standing and prestige, from her connection with the Deity. But in ancient times this figure of wedlock was more natural than with us, in so far as the human man and wife did not then occupy that relation of equality, to which civilisation has approximated; but the husband was the lord of his wife,—as much her Baal as the god was the Baal of the people,—her law-giver, in part her owner, and with full authority over the origin and subsistence of the bond between them. Marriage thus conceived was a figure for religion almost universal among the Semites. But as in the case of so many other religious ideas common to the Hebrews and their heathen kin, this one, when adopted by the prophets of Yahweh, underwent a thorough moral reformation. Indeed, if one were asked to point out a supreme instance of the operation of that unique conscience of the religion of Israel, which

was spoken of before,<sup>1</sup> one would have little difficulty in selecting its treatment of the idea of religious marriage. By the neighbours of Israel, the marriage of a god to his people was conceived with a grossness of feeling and illustrated by a foulness of ritual, which thoroughly demoralised the people, affording, as they did, to licentiousness the example and sanction of religion. So debased had the idea become, and so full of temptation to the Hebrews were the forms in which it was illustrated among their neighbours, that the religion of Israel might justly have been praised for achieving a great moral victory in excluding the figure altogether from its system. But the prophets of Yahweh dared the heavier task of retaining the idea of religious marriage, and won the diviner triumph of purifying and elevating it. This was, indeed, a new creation. Every physical suggestion was banished, and the relation was conceived as purely moral. Yet it was never refined to a mere form or abstraction. The prophets fearlessly expressed it in the warmest and most familiar terms of the love of man and woman. With a stern and absolute interpretation before them, in the Divine law, of the relations of a husband to his wife, they borrowed from that only so far as to do justice to the Almighty's initiative and authority in His relation with mortals ; and they laid far more emphasis on the instinctive and spontaneous affections, by which Yahweh and Israel had been drawn together. Thus, among a people naturally averse to think or to speak of God as *loving* <sup>2</sup> men, this close relation to Him of

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 264 f.

<sup>2</sup> 'Das eigentliche Wort "Liebe" kommt im A. T. von Gott fast gar nicht vor,—und wo es, bei einem späten Schriftsteller, vorkommt, ist es Bezeichnung seiner besondern Bundes-liebe zu Israel, deren natürliche Kehrseite der Hass gegen die feindlichen Völker ist.' Schultz, *A.T. Theologie*, 4th ed., p. 548.

marriage was expressed with a warmth, a tenderness, and a delicacy, that exceeded even the two other fond forms in which the Divine grace was conveyed,—of a father's and of a mother's love.

In this new creation of the marriage bond between God and His church, three prophets had a large share,—Hosea, Ezekiel, and the author of 'Second Isaiah.' To Hosea and Ezekiel it fell to speak chiefly of uglier aspects of the question,—the unfaithfulness of the wife and her divorce; but even then, the moral strength and purity of the Hebrew religion, its Divine vehemence and glow, were only the more evident for the unpromising character of the materials with which it dealt. To our prophet, on the contrary, it fell to speak of the winning back of the wife, and he has done so with wonderful delicacy and tenderness. Our prophet, it is true, has not one, but two, deep feelings about the love of God: it passes through him as the love of a mother, as well as the love of a husband. But while he lets us see the former only twice or thrice, the latter may be felt as the almost continual undercurrent of his prophecy, and often breaks to hearing, now in a sudden, single ripple of a phrase, and now in a long tide of marriage music. His lips open for his God on the language of wooing,—*speaking ye to the heart of Jerusalem*; and though his masculine figure for Israel as the Servant keeps his affection hidden for a time, this emerges again when the subject of Service is exhausted, till Israel, where she is not God's Servant, is God's Bride. In the series of passages on Sion, xlix-lii, the City is the Mother of His children, the Wife put away but never divorced. In chap. lxii she is called Hephzibah, *My delight-is-in-her*, and Beulah, *married*, for *Yahweh delighteth in thee and thy land shall be married . . . and with the joy of a bridegroom thy God shall joy*

*over thee.* The reserve of this—the limiting of the relation to one of affection and loyalty is remarkable in contrast to the more physical use of the figure in other religions. But it is in the first part of the chapter now before us that the relation is expressed with the most tender affection: vv. 1–10. The lines are less regular, and many of them longer, than in other poems by our prophet.

- liv. 1. *Ring out, O barren, that hast not borne,  
Break forth<sup>1</sup> and shout that never hast travailed !  
For more are the sons of her who is solitary  
Than the sons of the married, saith Yahweh.*
2. *Widen the place of thy tent,  
And thine awnings<sup>2</sup> stretch forth without stint.  
Lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes !*
3. *For right and left thou shalt spread abroad,  
Thy seed take possession of nations  
And re-people the desolate cities.*
4. *Be not afraid, thou shalt not be shamed,  
Be not confused, thou hast no cause to blush ;  
For the shame of thy youth thou shalt forget  
And remember no more the reproach of thy widow-  
hood.*
5. *For thy Maker Himself is thy Husband,  
Yahweh of Hosts is His Name,  
Thy Redeemer the Holy of Israel,  
The whole earth's God is He called !*
6. *For as a woman forsaken,  
And forpining in spirit hath Yahweh re-called  
thee.<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Heb. adds *into singing*, which LXX omits ; so most moderns.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. adds *of thy habitations*, which LXX omits ; it is superfluous both to sense and metre. *Stretch forth*, so some versions.

<sup>3</sup> A difficult couplet. To the first line Box would add *he brings thee back*, but neither text nor versions give trace of this ; Duhm, Budde, and

*The wife of one's youth can she be rejected?—  
Sayeth thy God.*

7. *But a little moment did I forsake thee,  
And with great compassions I gather thee back.*
8. *In an egre of anger<sup>1</sup> I hid  
My face for a moment from thee,  
But in troth everlasting I yearn o'er thee.  
Thy Redeemer Yahweh hath spoken.*
9. *As the days<sup>2</sup> of Noah is this to Me  
When I swore that the flood should not cross the  
earth,  
So anger at thee I forswear and reproach against  
thee.*
10. *For the mountains may yield  
And the hills be shaken,  
But My troth shall not yield from thee  
Nor My Covenant of peace be shaken,  
Saith Yahweh, who yearneth o'er thee.*

With ver. 11 the poem passes from the figure of Sion as a Bride to herself as the City, emerging clear from all the tempest and waste of war, her stones rebuilt like a woman's eyes and a woman's jewels.

11. *Afflicted, storm-tossed, unconsolated  
Behold, I am going to lay  
With stibium<sup>3</sup> thy stones,  
Thy foundations in sapphires.*

others propose in the second to read *I have called*, and remove Yahweh to the next couplet. *Forsaken, forpining*, an attempt to echo the Heb. alliteration; Box: *outcast . . . downcast*.

<sup>1</sup> *Egre of anger*, an attempt to reproduce the Heb. *shešeph kešeph*; *egre* = *spate*.

<sup>2</sup> So some Heb. MSS. and Codd. of LXX, Syr., Targ., Vulg.

<sup>3</sup> Or *antimony*, used for blackening the border of the eyes, and thus appropriate to the woman-city here addressed; appropriate also, as



- liv. 12. *I shall make thy pinnacles rubies  
And thy gates carbuncles,  
And the whole of thy border jewels.*
13. *Thy builders <sup>1</sup> all shall be taught of Yahweh;  
And great shall the peace of thy children be.*
14. *Right and sound <sup>2</sup> shalt thou settle thyself.  
<sup>3</sup> Far from oppression, thou need'st not fear,  
And from terror, it shall not come near thee.*
15. [*Lo, if any stir strife,<sup>4</sup> this is not from Me,  
Who strives with thee, 'gainst thee shall he fall.*]
16. *Behold, I created the smith  
That blows the fire of coals,  
Forging a weapon for work of its own,<sup>5</sup>  
And I too created the waster to ruin.*
17. *No weapon formed against thee shall prosper,  
And every tongue that stands up with thee  
At law thou shalt prove in the wrong.  
Such is the heritage of the servants of Yahweh  
And their righting <sup>6</sup> is from Me—Yahweh's Rede.*

## II. A LAST CALL TO THE BUSY (chap. lv)

Another address to the Jews in Exile on the Eve of Return is chap. lv. Its clear music and pure gospel

Guthe, quoted by Cheyne, points out, to the old black asphalt mortar of the Hebrews. But, with Wellhausen, some would read *nophekkh*, *carbuncle* or *onyx* for the Heb. *pukh*.

<sup>1</sup> By the change of one vowel in the Heb. *sons*.

<sup>2</sup> Lit. *in righteousness*, but here again in the objective meaning of the term; see p. 232.

<sup>3</sup> Reading with Gratz and others *thou art* or *shalt be far* instead of Heb. *be far*.

<sup>4</sup> The meaning is difficult; '*gather together* can hardly be defended and, moreover, does not suit the construction . . . the verb is perhaps best explained as a by-form of a root meaning to *stir up* (*strife*) or pick a quarrel. Prov. xv. 18' (Skinner). But the whole couplet is doubtful.

<sup>5</sup> Or *according to his work* or *craft*.

<sup>6</sup> Again righteousness in its objective sense.

render detailed exposition superfluous, except of the circumstances which, as it implies, called it forth and of some other points within it. This, however, is deferred till after the full translation of it. The metre of it is, as often elsewhere in our prophecy, in lines of equal length but sometimes irregular.

- lv 1. *Ho, all ye thirsty come to the waters,  
And he with no money, come buy ye and eat,<sup>1</sup>  
Come on, without money buy corn  
And wine and milk without price.*
2. *Why spend ye money on what is not bread,  
And your hard earnings on what cannot fill?  
Hearken to me and so eat what is good,  
And your souls shall revel in fatness.*
3. *Incline your ear and come unto Me,  
Hear and your souls shall live.<sup>2</sup>  
And with you I make a covenant for ever—  
The faithful mercies<sup>3</sup> of David still to be trusted.*
4. *Lo, as I set him a witness<sup>4</sup> to peoples,  
A prince and commander of peoples,*
5. *Lo, so thou shalt call for a nation thou know'st not  
And nations that know thee not to thee shall they  
run,  
All for the sake of Yahweh thy God,  
The Holy of Israel, for thee hath He glorified.*
6. *Seek ye to Yahweh while He may be found,  
Call ye upon Him while He is near!*

<sup>1</sup> Duhm and Budde, Moffatt and Box would alter the text to *And those without strength eat!*

<sup>2</sup> By Budde and others this couplet is omitted as a superfluous later addition—perhaps rightly.

<sup>3</sup> *Faithful mercies*—the Heb. *hesedh* includes fidelity as well as affection.

<sup>4</sup> Budde reads *shepherd*.

- lv. 7. *Let the wicked forsake his way  
And the evil man his thoughts,  
And to Yahweh return that He may pity him,  
And to our God who abundantly pardons.<sup>1</sup>*
8. *For not are My thoughts your thoughts  
Nor your ways My ways—'tis Yahweh's Rede.*
9. *But as high <sup>2</sup> as heaven is above the earth  
So much higher My ways than the ways of you,  
And My thoughts than your thoughts.*
10. *For just as the rain comes down  
And the snow from heaven,  
And does not return <sup>3</sup> till it waters the earth,  
And makes it bring forth and bud,  
And give seed to the sower and bread to the eater ;*
11. *So My Word shall be that goes out of My Mouth !  
It shall not return to Me void <sup>4</sup>  
Without having done what I purposed,  
And attaining the thing for which I sent it.*
12. *For with gladness shall ye go out,  
And be led forth in peace,  
Mountains and hills break to song before you,<sup>5</sup>  
And all trees of the field clap their hands.*
13. *Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress,  
And instead of the nettle the myrtle shall spring,  
And unto Yahweh for a name shall it be  
For a sign for ever—it shall not be cut off.*

The commercial figures in the opening of this poem arrest attention. We saw that Babylon was the centre of the world's trade and that in Babylon the Hebrews fully formed those mercantile habits which have become

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 7 is omitted by Duhm, Budde, and others as a later addition.

<sup>2</sup> Reading with the Versions כְּבֹדֶה.

<sup>3</sup> Omitting *thither* with the LXX.

<sup>4</sup> *Void* LXX omits.

<sup>5</sup> Budde omits *before you* as overloading the line.

next to religion or in place of religion the character of the race. Born to be priests and prophets the Jews drew down their splendid gifts of attention, pertinacity, and imagination from God upon the world till they equally appear to have been born traders. Many laboured and prospered exceedingly, gathering property and settling in comfort. They drank of the streams of Babylon, no longer made bitter by their tears, and ceased to think upon Sion.

But, of all men, exiles can least forget that there is that which money can never buy. Money and his work can do much for the banished man ; but they can never bring him to the true climate of his heart, nor win for him his real life. And of all exiles the Jew, however free and prosperous in his banishment he might be, was least able to find his life among the good things—the water, the wine, and the milk—of a strange country. For home to Israel meant not only home, but duty, righteousness, and God.<sup>1</sup> God had created the heart of this people to hunger for His word, and in His word they could alone find the *fatness of their soul*. Success and comfort shall never satisfy the soul which God has created for obedience. The simplicity of the obedience here asked from Israel, the emphasis laid upon mere obedience as bringing in full satisfaction, is impressive: *hearken to me, and so eat that which is good ; incline your ear and come unto Me, hear and your soul shall live*. It suggests the number of plausible reasons, which may be offered for every worldly life, and to which there is no answer save the call of God's own voice to obedience and surrender. To obedience God then promises influence. In place of being a mere trafficker with the nations, or, at best, their purveyor

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Isaiah i-xxxix*, pp. 461 ff.

and money-lender, the Jew, if he obeys God, shall be the priest and prophet of the peoples. This is illustrated in vv. 4b-6, the only hard passage in the chapter. God will treat His people like David; whether the historical David or the ideal David described by Jeremiah and Ezekiel is uncertain.<sup>1</sup> God will conclude an *everlasting covenant* with them, equivalent to the *favours* showered on him *which are still to be trusted*. As God set him for a *witness* (that is, a prophet) to the peoples, a *prince and a leader to the peoples*, so (in phrases that recall some about David in the eighteenth Psalm) shall they as prophets and kings influence strange nations—*calling for a nation thou knowest not, and nations that have not known thee shall run unto thee*. The effect of the unconscious influence, which obedience to God, and surrender to Him as His instrument, are sure to work, could not be more grandly stated. But we ought not to let another point escape

<sup>1</sup> The structure of this difficult passage is this. Ver. 3 states the equation: the everlasting covenant with the people Israel = the sure, unfailing favours bestowed upon the individual David. Vv. 4 and 5 unfold the contents of the equation. Each side of it is introduced by a *Lo*. Lo, on the one side, what I have done to David; Lo, on the other, what I will do to you. As David was a *witness of peoples*, a *prince and commander of peoples*, so shalt thou call to them and make them obey thee. This is clear enough. But who is David? The phrase the *favours of David* suggests 2 Chron. vi. 42, *remember the mercies of David thy servant*; and those in ver. 5 recall Psalm xviii. 43 f.: *Thou hast made me the head of nations; A people I know not shall serve me; As soon as they hear of me they shall obey me; Strangers shall submit themselves to me*. Yet both Jeremiah and Ezekiel call the coming Messiah David. Jer. xxx. 9: *They shall serve Yahweh their God and David their King*. Ezek. xxxiv. 23: *And I will set up a shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I Yahweh will be their God, and My servant David prince among them*. After these writers, our prophet could hardly help using the name David in its Messianic sense, even though he also quoted (in ver. 5) a few phrases recalling the historical David. But the question does not matter much. The real point is the transference of the favours bestowed upon an individual to the whole people.



our attention, for it has its contribution to make to the main question of the Servant. As explained in the note to a sentence above, it is uncertain whether *David* is the historical king of that name, or the Messiah still to come. In either case, he is an individual, whose functions and qualities are transferred to the people, and that is the point demanding attention. If our prophecy can thus so easily speak of God's purpose of service to the Gentiles passing from the individual to the nation, why should it not also be able to speak of the opposite process, the transference of the service from the nation to the single Servant? When the nation were unworthy and unredeemed, could not the prophet as easily think of the relegation of their office to an individual, as he now promises to their obedience that that office shall be restored to them?

The next verses urgently repeat calls to repentance. And then comes a passage which is grandly meant to make us feel the contrast of its scenery with the toil, the money-getting and the money-spending from which the chapter started. From all that sordid, barren, strife in the markets of Babylon, we are led out to look at the boundless heavens, and are told that *as high as they are above the earth, so are God's ways higher than our ways, and God's reckonings than our reckonings*; we are led out to see the gentle fall of rain and snow that so easily *makes the earth to bring forth and bud, and give seed to the sower and bread to the eater*, and are told that it is a symbol of God's word, which we were called from our vain labours to obey; we are led out *to the mountains and to the hills breaking before you into singing*, and to the free, natural trees<sup>1</sup> tossing their

<sup>1</sup> English version, *trees of the field*, but the field is the country beyond the bounds of cultivation; and as beasts of the field means *wild beasts*, so this means *wild trees*,—unforced, unaided by man's labour.



unlopped branches ; we are led to see even the desert change, for *instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress, and instead of the nettle shall come up the myrtle*. Thus does the prophet lead the starved worldly heart, that has sought in vain its fulness from its toil, through scenes of Nature, to that free omnipotent Grace, of which Nature's processes are the splendid sacraments.

### III. PROSELYTES AND EUNUCHS (chap. lvi. 1-8) <sup>1</sup>

Whatever be the date of this small prophecy, its opening verse, *My salvation is near to come, and My righteousness to be revealed*, attaches it very closely to the preceding. If chap. lv expounds the grace and faithfulness of God in the Return of His people, and asks from them only faith as the price of such benefits, chap. lvi. 1-8 adds the demand that those who return shall keep the law, and extends their blessings to foreigners and others, who though technically disqualified from the privileges of the born Israelite, had attached themselves to Yahweh and His Law.

Such was very necessary. The dispersion of Israel had already begun to accomplish its missionary purpose ; pious souls in many lands had felt the spiritual power of this disfigured people, and chosen for Yahweh's sake to follow its uncertain fortunes. It was indispensable

<sup>1</sup> I have left this section where it stood in previous editions, though I am not so sure as I was in 1890 that lvi. 1-8 belongs to the eve of the Return. Many hold that it implies a date after the re-building of the temple (vv. 5, 7) and the re-gathering of the Exiles to their land (8). This is not certain, but possible. See especially Whitehouse's introduction to chs. lvi-lxvi in the *Century Bible, Isaiah, Vol. II*, pp. 225 ff.

that these Gentile converts should be comforted against the withdrawal of Israel from Babylon, for they said, *Yahweh will surely separate me from His people*, as well as against the time when it might become necessary to purge the restored community from heathen constituents.<sup>1</sup> Again, all the male Jews could hardly have escaped the disqualification, which the cruel custom of the East inflicted on some, at least, of every body of captives. It is almost certain that Daniel and his companions were eunuchs, and if they, then perhaps many more. But the Book of Deuteronomy had declared mutilation of this kind to be a bar against entrance to the assembly of the Lord. It is not one of the least interesting of the spiritual results of the Exile, that its necessities compelled the abrogation of the letter of such a law. With a freedom which foreshadows Christ's own expansion of the ancient strictness, and in words which would not be out of place in the Sermon on the Mount, this prophecy ensures to pious men, whom cruelty had deprived of the two things dearest to the heart of an Israelite,—a present place, and a perpetuation through his posterity, in the community of God,—that in the new temple a *monument and a name* should be given, *better* and more enduring *than sons or daughters*. This prophecy is further noteworthy as the first instance of the strong emphasis which the later part of our Book lays upon the keeping of the Sabbath, and as first calling the temple the *House of Prayer*. Both of these characteristics are due, of course, to the Exile, the necessities of which prevented almost every religious act save that of keeping fasts and Sabbaths and serving God in prayer.

<sup>1</sup> Neh. xiii.

- lvi. 1. *Thus sayeth Yahweh ;  
 Keep ye the Law and do right,<sup>1</sup>  
 My Salvation is near to come  
 And My Righting<sup>1</sup> to be revealed.*
2. *Happy the man who practises this,  
 And the son of man who holds to it,  
 Keeping the Sabbath so as not to profane it,  
 And keeping his hand from all doing of wrong.*
3. *And let not the alien say who hath joined him to  
 Yahweh,<sup>2</sup>  
 Yahweh will sure cut me off from His people.  
 And let not the eunuch say,  
 Lo, a dry tree am I !*
4. *For thus sayeth Yahweh,  
 Unto eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths,  
 And choose that in which I delight,  
 And are holding fast to My Covenant—*
5. *To them will I give in My House  
 And My walls a pillar<sup>3</sup> and name  
 Which are better than sons and daughters.  
 A lasting name will I give them  
 That shall not be cut off.*
6. *And the aliens who have joined them to Yahweh  
 To serve Him and love His Name  
 To be to Him servants and handmaids,<sup>4</sup>  
 All keeping the Sabbath so as not to profane it  
 And holding fast to My Covenant—*
7. *Even them will I bring to My Holy Mount  
 And give them to joy in My House of Prayer ;*

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *righteousness* first in its subjective, then in its objective sense.

<sup>2</sup> With LXX omit *saying*.

<sup>3</sup> Lit. *hand*, used of the pillar or column set up by Absalom to keep his name in remembrance, 2 Sam. xviii. 18.

<sup>4</sup> So LXX.

*Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices  
Shall be <sup>1</sup> accepted on Mine Altar ;  
For My House shall be called  
House-of-Prayer-for-All-Nations.*

8. *'Tis the Rede of the Lord Yahweh,  
Who gathereth in the outcasts of Israel,  
Still will I gather to him, besides his already  
gathered.*

<sup>1</sup> After LXX and Targ.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE REKINDLING OF THE CIVIC CONSCIENCE

#### ISAIAH LVI. 9-LIX

IT was inevitable, when their city was again fairly in sight, or (it may be) re-established in its independence that the civic conscience should re-waken in the people ; that in prospect or, in fact, of their again becoming responsible for the discharge of justice and other political duties, they should be reminded by the prophet of their national faults in these respects, and of God's eternal laws concerning them. If we keep this in mind, we shall understand the presence of the group of prophecies at which we have now arrived, chap. lvi. 9-lix. Hitherto almost nothing has been said of the social righteousness of the people. Israel's righteousness, as we saw in our fourteenth chapter, has had the very different meaning for our prophet of her pardon and restoration to her rights. But in chap. lvi. 9-lix we shall find the blame of civic wrong, and of other kinds of sin of which possibly Israel could have been guilty only in her own land ; we shall listen to exhortations to social justice and mercy like those we heard from Isaiah to his generation. Yet these are mingled with voices, and concluded with promises, which speak of the Return as imminent. Undoubtedly exilic elements reveal themselves. And the total impression

is that some prophet of the late Exile, if not the one, whom we have been following, either collected these reminiscences of his people's sin in the days of their freedom, in order to remind them, before they went back again to political responsibility, why it was they were punished and how apt they were to go astray, or else much later, when they were again settled and their own masters, exposed the civic sins to which they had reverted. Yet clear as are the indications of a late post-exilic authorship in some passages, I cannot divest myself of the impression that others are more suited to the eve of the return ; and that the recent wholesale relegation of the bulk of chaps. lvi–lxvi to a late post-exilic date has been too precipitate. Whatever be the solution of a somewhat difficult problem, I have ventured to gather this mixed group of prophecies under the title of the *Rekindling of the Civic Conscience*. They fall into three groups : first, chap. lvi. 9–lvii ; second, chap. lviii ; third, chap. lix.

### I. A CONSCIENCE BUT NO GOD (chap. lvi. 9–lvii)

This is one of the sections which almost decisively place the literary unity of 'Second Isaiah' past possibility of belief. If chap. lvi. 1–8 flushes with the dawn of restoration, chap. lvi. 9–lvii is very dark with the coming of the night, which preceded that dawn. Many have thought that the greater part of this prophecy must have been composed before the people left Palestine for exile. The state of Israel, which it pictures, recalls the descriptions of Hosea, and of the eleventh chapter of Zechariah. God's flock are still in charge of their own shepherds (lvi. 9–12),—a description inapplicable to Israel in exile. The shepherds are sleepy, greedy, sensual, drunkards,—victims to the



curse, against which Amos and Isaiah hurled their strongest woes. That sots like them should be spared while the righteous die unnoticed deaths (lvii. 1) can only be explained by the approaching judgement. *No man considereth that the righteous is taken away from the Evil. The Evil* is either, as some think, persecution or a Divine judgement,—the Exile. But *he entereth peace, they rest in their beds, each one that hath walked straight before him*,—for the righteous there is the peace of death and the undisturbed tomb of his fathers. If the latter, Israel shall find her pious dead when she returns ! The verse recalls that summons in Isa. xxvi, in which we heard the Mother Nation calling upon the dead she had left in Palestine to rise and increase her returned numbers.

Then the prophet indicts the nation for a religious and political unfaithfulness, which we know was their besetting sin in the days before they left the Holy Land. The scenery, in whose natural objects he describes them seeking their worship, is the scenery of Palestine, not of Mesopotamia,—*terebinths* and *wâdies*, and *clefts of the rocks*, and *smooth stones of the wâdies*. The unchaste and bloody sacrifices with which he charges them bear the appearance more of Canaanite than of Babylonian idolatry. The humiliating political suits which they paid—*thou wentest to the king (?) with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thine ambassadors afar off, and didst debase thyself even unto Sheol* (ver. 9)—could not be attributed to a captive people, but were the sort of degrading diplomacy that Israel learned from Ahaz. While the painful pursuit of strength (ver. 10), the shabby political cowardice (ver. 11), the fanatic sacrifice of manhood's purity and childhood's life (ver. 5), and especially the evil conscience which drove their blind hearts through

such pain and passion in a sincere quest for righteousness (ver. 12), may betray the age of idolatrous reaction from the great Puritan victory of 701,—a generation exaggerating all the old falsehood and fear, against which Isaiah had inveighed, with the new conscience of sin which his preaching had created.<sup>1</sup> The dark streak of blood and lust that runs through the condemned idolatry, and the stern conscience which only deepens its darkness, are no small reason for dating the prophecy after 700. The very phrases of Isaiah, which it contains, have tempted some to attribute it to himself. This is not probable; but at least those who would date it from the reign of Manasseh have no small reason for their argument.

Another feature corroborates this prophecy's original independence of its context. Its style is immediately and extremely rugged. The reader of the original feels the difference at once. It is the difference between travel on the level roads of Mesopotamia, with their unchanging horizons, and the jolting carriage of the stony paths of Higher Palestine, with their glimpses rapidly shifting from gorge to peak. But the remarkable thing is that the usual style of 'Second Isaiah' is resumed before the end of the prophecy. One cannot always be sure of the exact verse at which such a literary change takes place. In this case some feel it as soon as the middle of lvii. 11, with the words, *Was it that I held My peace for so long time, and thou fearedst Me not?*<sup>2</sup> It is surely more sensible, however, after ver. 14, in which we are arrested in any case by an alteration of standpoint. In ver. 14 we are on in the

<sup>1</sup> See vol. i, pp. 379 f.

<sup>2</sup> So Ewald, Cheyne, and Briggs. Ewald takes lvi. 9–lvii. 11a as an interruption, borrowed from an earlier prophet in a time of persecution of the exilic prophecy, which goes on smoothly from lvi. 8 to lvii. 11b.

Exile again—before ver. 14 I cannot recognise any exilic symptom—and the way of return is before us. *And one said*,—it is the repetition to the letter of the strange anonymous voice of chap. xl. 6,—*and one said, Cast ye up, Cast ye up, open up, or sweep open, a way, lift the stumbling-blocks from the ways of My people.* And now the rhythm has certainly returned to the prevailing style of ‘Second Isaiah,’ and the temper is again that of promise and comfort.

These sudden shiftings of circumstance and of prospect are enough to show the thoughtful reader of Scripture how hard is the problem of the unity of ‘Second Isaiah.’

Let us take, now, the full translations of chaps. lvi. 9–lvii

The first three poems, from whatever hand they may be, are all in the form now familiar to us, that of the *Kinah* or elegiac verse, lvi. 9–lvii. 12. Here is the first of them, lvi. 9–12, divisible into four strophes of four lines each.

lvi. 9. *All ye beasts of the field, come on to devour,  
All beasts of the forest !<sup>1</sup>*

10. *His<sup>2</sup> watchmen are all of them blind,  
Witless to heed,  
Dumb dogs are they all  
Unable to bark,  
Dreaming (?), reclining . . . (?)<sup>3</sup>  
Loving to slumber.*

<sup>1</sup> *Forest* only in the Scottish sense of the word, moorland whether with or without trees, the home of game. Heb. *ya'ar* means no more than the Arabic *wa'ar*, bush or jungle.

<sup>2</sup> With Duhm most moderns read *my*; but Budde: *My people their watchmen.*

<sup>3</sup> Budde suggests the addition *on couches* to regularise the metre.

11. *And the dogs have strong appetites,  
Never know they've enough !  
[And they are shepherds forsooth,  
Witless to heed.]*<sup>1</sup>  
*And all their own ways they have turned,  
Each man for his profit.*<sup>2</sup>
12. *' Come on and let me fetch wine,  
That we may swill liquor,  
And to-morrow shall be as to-day,  
Great beyond measure.'*

The date of the next verses is quite uncertain ; they have been variously assigned—to Manasseh's reign, to Jeremiah's time, and to the times of Ezra and Nehemiah, in which last case those whom they indict are supposed to be the Samaritans. Who is sufficient to decide ? The curt, elliptical text has provoked many emendations. On the whole the *Kinah* measure prevails, but in ver. 5 becomes irregular as often it does elsewhere ; so we need not, with modern precisians, take the verse as intruded.

- lvii. 1. *The just disappears and none  
Lays it to heart,  
And pious men are swept off  
And no one reflects,*
2. *That*<sup>3</sup> *the just is swept off from the evil  
And enters peace.  
Let them rest in their lairs*<sup>4</sup> *Who went straightforward.*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This couplet, omitted by some as a needless repetition of 10a.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. adds *from his end or quarter*. Omit with LXX, it overloads the line.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. either *that* or *for*.

<sup>4</sup> Lit. *lying-places*, hence *beds* as most render, but as *graves* are meant the Scots term *lair*s seems the proper rendering.

<sup>5</sup> Lit. *in his straightness* = *straight before him*.

- lvii. 3. *But you—draw nigh hither,  
Sons of a sorceress,  
Brood of an adulterer and whore.<sup>1</sup>*
4. *At whom make ye merry ?  
At whom do ye widen the mouth  
Stretch out the tongue ?  
Are ye not apostacy's children,  
Falsehood's own breed ?*
5. *Inflaming yourselves mid the terebinths  
Under each rustling<sup>2</sup> tree,  
Slaughtering the children in the valleys  
Mid<sup>3</sup> the clefts of the rocks.*
6. *With the slippery<sup>4</sup> things of the vale is thy share.  
They, they are thy lot.  
Even to them thou hast poured libations,  
Hast lifted oblations.  
For these shall I be appeased ?<sup>5</sup>*

The next verses, 7–13, may be taken as a separate poem (so Budde), though some take them as a continuation of the preceding one. The metre is still that of the *Kinah*.

7. *On a high and lifted hill  
Thou hast set thy bed,  
And hast mounted even there  
To slaughter for sacrifice.*

<sup>1</sup> So by the transposition of two consonants ; which LXX supports.

<sup>2</sup> More than ever I am sure that the Heb. word means *rustling* rather than *green* ; see *Deuteronomy* (Camb. Bible for Schools), p. 161.

<sup>3</sup> So LXX ; Heb. *under*.

<sup>4</sup> Or *smooth* ; there is a play of words between this *hallēkē* and *helketh thy share*.

<sup>5</sup> A climax, needlessly elided by some moderns.

8. *Behind the door and the door-post  
Thou hast set up thy phallus.  
And not for Me<sup>1</sup> thou hast stripped and gone up,  
And made wide thy bed.  
And didst bid for thyself of those  
Thou lovest to lie with.<sup>2</sup>*
9. *And hast decked thee with ointment for Melekh<sup>3</sup>  
And lavished thy perfumes,  
And dispatched thine envoys afar,  
And even as deep as Sheol.*
10. *Though worn with the mass of thy journey  
Thou saidst not, No use!  
Fresh life thou hast found to thy hand  
And therefore not fainted.*
11. *Whom then hast thou dreaded and feared,  
That so false thou shouldst play?  
While Me thou hast not remembered  
Nor laid on thy heart.  
Was it not I was silent and hidden<sup>4</sup>  
And of Me thou wert not afraid?*
12. *Myself will expose thy righteousness  
And thy doings.*
13. *And when thou criest these shall not avail thee,  
Nor save thee thine abominable things.  
But them all shall the wind bear off  
A breath take away.  
Yet who trusteth in Me shall inherit the land  
And possess My Holy Mountain.*

<sup>1</sup> Duhm and others by reason of it.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. adds *the hand* (or member?) *thou sawest*; LXX omits, but adds *thou didst multiply thy whoring*; both clauses making a couplet.

<sup>3</sup> So Symmachus and Vulg. *Melekh* the deity sometimes vocalised *Molekh*. If Heb. *the King* be read the clause goes with the following.

<sup>4</sup> So LXX and other versions. Heb. with the same consonants *and from of old*.



\ The next verses, 14–20, replace the *Kinah* metre by lines of pretty equal length. There are echoes of chap. xl, and whoever the author may have been he wrote after the release from Captivity but before the Return.

- lvii. 14. *Cast ye up, cast ye up, level a way,  
Raise up the blocks from the path of My people !*
15. *For thus saith the High and the Lofty,  
Abiding for ever and His Name is the Holy  
The high and the holy <sup>1</sup> I dwell in  
With the crushed, too, and lowly in spirit,  
To revive the spirit of the lowly,  
And revive the heart of the contrite.*
16. *For I will not contend for aye  
Nor for ever be wrathful,  
For their <sup>2</sup> spirit before Me would fail,  
And the souls I Myself have made.*
17. *For his guilt I was wroth for the moment <sup>3</sup>  
And hiding in wrath I smote him ;  
While he went back his heart's own way.*
18. *His ways have I seen but will heal him,  
Give him rest and requite him with comfort.*
19. *Creating for his mourners fruit of the lips.  
Peace, peace for the far and the near,  
Saith Yahweh, and I will heal him.*
20. *[But the wicked are like the sea when tossed,  
For it cannot keep quiet ;  
And its waters toss mire and dirt—*
21. *No peace saith my God for the wicked.] <sup>4</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Some render quite possibly *as the Holy*.

<sup>2</sup> By transferring the first consonant of the succeeding word to the end of *spirit*.

<sup>3</sup> Reading so on the suggestion of LXX instead of Heb. *for his gain*, or *spoil*.

<sup>4</sup> Vv. 20, 21 are regarded by many as an editorial addition ; and, indeed, their connection with the preceding poem is not apparent.

*In the length of thy way thou wast wearied, yet thou didst not say, It is hopeless ; life for thy hand—that is, real, practical strength—didst thou find : wherefore thou didst not break down* (lvii. 10). And they practised their painful and passionate idolatry with a real conscience. They were seeking to work out righteousness for themselves (lvii. 12 should be rendered: *I will expose your righteousness*, the caricature of righteousness which you attempt). The most worldly statesman among them had his sincere ideal for Israel, and intended to enable her, in the possession of her land and holy mountain, to fulfil her destiny (ver. 13). The most gross idolater had a hunger and thirst after righteousness, and burnt his children or sacrificed his purity to satisfy the vague promptings of his unenlightened conscience.

It was indeed a generation which had kept its conscience, but lost its God ; and what we have in lvii. 15–21 is just the lost and forgotten God speaking of His Nature and His Will. They have been worshipping idols, creatures of their own fears and cruel passions. But He is the *high and lofty one*—two of the simplest adjectives in the language, yet sufficient to lift Him they describe above the distorting mists of human imagination. They thought of the Deity as sheer wrath and force, scarcely to be appeased by men even through the most bloody rites and passionate self-sacrifice. But He says, *The high and the holy I dwell in, yet with him also that is contrite and humble of spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.* The rest of the chapter is to the darkened consciences a plain statement of the moral character of God's working. God always punishes sin, and yet the sinner is not abandoned. Though he go in his own way, God *watches his ways*

*in order to heal him. I create the fruit of the lips, that is, thanksgivings: Peace, peace to him that is far off and him that is near, saith Yahweh, and I will heal him.* But, as in chap. xlvi and chap. l, a warning comes last, and behind the clear, forward picture of the comforted and restored of Yahweh we see the weird background of gloomy, restless wickedness.

## II. SOCIAL SERVICE AND THE SABBATH (chap. lvi)

Several critics<sup>1</sup> regard chap. lvi as post-exilic, because of its declarations against formal fasting and the neglect of social charity, which are akin to those of post-exilic prophets like Zechariah and Joel, and seem to imply that the people addressed are again independent and responsible for the conduct of their social duties. The question largely turns on the amount of social responsibility we conceive the Jews to have had during the Exile. Now we have seen that many of them enjoyed considerable freedom: they had their houses and households; they had their slaves; they traded and were possessed of wealth. They were, therefore, in a position to be chargeable with the duties to which chap. lvi calls them. The addresses of Ezekiel to his fellow-exiles have many features in common with chap. lvi, although they do not mention fasting; and fasting itself was a characteristic habit of the exiles, in regard to which it is quite likely they should err just as is described in chap. lvi. Moreover, there is a resemblance between this chapter's comments upon the people's inquiries of God (ver. 2) and Ezekiel's reply when certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of Yahweh.<sup>2</sup> And again vv. 11 and 12

<sup>1</sup> Including Cheyne and most recent critics.

<sup>2</sup> Ezek. xxi.; cf. xxxiii. 30 f.

of chap. lviii are evidently addressed to people in prospect of return to their own land and restoration of their city. It is, therefore, not impossible to date chap. lviii from the Exile. But we see no reason to put it as early as Ewald does, who assigns it to a younger contemporary of Ezekiel. There is no linguistic evidence that it is an insertion, or from another hand than that of our prophet. There were room and occasion for it in those years which followed the actual deliverance of the Jews by Cyrus, but preceded the restoration of Jerusalem,—those years in which there were no longer political problems in the way of the people's return for our prophet to discuss, and therefore their moral defects were all the more thrust upon his attention; and especially, when in the near prospect of their political independence, their social sins roused his apprehensions. But, of course, an absolute opinion is not possible.

Those who have never heard an angry Oriental speak, have no idea of what power of denunciation lies in the human throat. In the East, where a dry climate and large leisure bestow upon the voice a depth and suppleness prevented by our vulgar haste of life and teasing weather, men have elaborated their throat-letters to a number unknown in any Western alphabet; and upon the lowest notes they have put an edge, that comes up shrill and keen through the roar of the upper gutturals, till you feel their wrath cut as well as sweep you before it. In the Oriental throat, speech goes down deep enough to echo all the breadth of the inner man; while the possibility of expressing within so supple an organ nearly every tone of scorn or surprise preserves anger from that suspicion of spite or of exhaustion, which is conveyed by too liberal a use of the nasal or palatal letters. Hence in the Hebrew language *to call with the*

*throat* means to call with vehemence, but with self-command ; with passion, yet as a man ; using every figure of satire, but earnestly ; neither forgetting wrath for mere art's sake, nor allowing wrath to escape the grip of the stronger muscles of the voice. It is *to lift the voice like a trumpet*,—an instrument, which, with whatever variety of music its upper notes may indulge our ears, never suffers its main tone of authority to drop, never slacks its imperative appeal to the wills of the hearers.

This is the style of chap. lviii, which opens with the words, *Call with the throat, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet*. Perhaps no subject more readily provokes to satire and sneers than the subject of the chapter,—the union of formal religion and unlovely life. Yet in this chapter there is not a sneer from first to last. The speaker suppresses the temptation to use his nasal tones, and utters, not as the satirist, but as the prophet. For his purpose is not to sport with his people's hypocrisy, but to sweep them out of it. Before he has done, his urgent speech, that has not lingered to sneer nor exhausted itself in screaming, passes forth to spend its unchecked impetus upon final promise and gospel. It is a wise lesson from a master preacher, and half of the fruitlessness of modern preaching is due to the neglect of it. The pulpit tempts men to be either too bold or too timid about sin ; either to whisper or to scold ; to euphemise or to exaggerate ; to be conventional or hysterical. But two things are necessary,—the facts must be stated, and the whole manhood of the preacher, and not only his scorn nor only his anger nor only an official temper, brought to bear upon them. *Call with the throat, spare not, like a trumpet lift up thy voice, and publish to My people their transgression, and to the house of Jacob their sin.*



The subject of the chapter is the habits of a religious people,—the earnestness and regularity of their religious performance contrasted with the neglect of their social relations. The second verse, ‘the descriptions in which are evidently drawn from life,’<sup>1</sup> tells us that *the people sought God daily, and had a zeal to know His ways, as a nation that had done righteousness*,—fulfilled the legal worship,—and had not forsaken the law<sup>2</sup> of their God : *they ask of Me laws<sup>2</sup> of righteousness*,—that is, a legal worship, the performance of which might make them righteous,—and in drawing near to God they take delight. They had, in fact, a great greed for ordinances and functions,<sup>3</sup>—for the revival of such forms as they had been accustomed to of old. Like some poor prostrate rose, whose tendrils miss the props by which they were wont to rise to the sun, the religious conscience and affections of Israel, violently torn from their immemorial supports, lay limp and windswept on a bare land, and longed for God to raise some substitute for those altars of Sion by which, in the dear days of old, they had lifted themselves to the light of His face. In the absence of anything better, they turned to the chill and shadowed forms of the fasts they had instituted.<sup>4</sup> But they did not thereby reach the face of God. *Wherefore have we fasted*, say they, *and Thou hast not seen ? we have humbled our souls, and Thou takest no notice ?* The answer comes swiftly : Because your fasting is a mere form ! *Lo, in the very day of your fast ye find a business to do, and all your workmen you overtask.*<sup>5</sup> So formal is your fasting that your ordinary eager, selfish,

<sup>1</sup> Delitzsch.

<sup>2</sup> Mishpat and mishpatim, cf. p. 456.

<sup>3</sup> Such as is also expressed by exiles in Psalms xlii, xliii, and lxiii, but there with what spiritual temper, here with what a hard legal conception of righteousness.

<sup>4</sup> For these, see p. 62.

<sup>5</sup> So one reading ; p. 450.



cruel life goes on beside it just the same. Nay, it is worse than usual, for your worthless, wearisome fast but puts a sharper edge upon your temper: *Lo, for strife and contention ye fast.* And it has no religious value: *Is it this thou wilt call a fast and a day acceptable to Yahweh?* One of the great surprises of the human heart is that self-denial does not without love win merit or peace. *Though I give my body to be burned and have not love it profiteth me nothing.* Without love self-denial is self-indulgence. But now let us hear this great prophecy speak for itself. The metre is in lines mostly of equal length, but as usual the length sometimes varies; vv. 13, 14 may originally have been a separate piece.

- lviii. 1. *Call with the throat, refrain not,  
Like a trumpet lift high thy voice,  
And declare to My folk their rebellion,  
To the house of Jacob their sins.*
2. *While of Me day by day they enquire  
And are busy to know My ways.  
Like a nation that practises righteousness  
Nor hath forsaken the Law of its God ;  
They ask of Me rules of righteousness  
And are zealous in drawing to God :*
3. *' Why have we fasted and Thou seest not,  
Afflicted ourselves and Thou dost not note ?'  
Lo, on your fasts ye are out to find business  
And exact every pledge in your hands.<sup>1</sup>*
4. *Lo, for strife and for quarrel ye fast,  
And to smite with the fist the poor ;<sup>2</sup>  
Never will fasting like yours to-day  
Make your voice to be heard on high.*

<sup>1</sup> So Klostermann and others, following suggestions by the LXX. Heb. *exact all your labourers* (?).

<sup>2</sup> So LXX; Heb. *of wickedness*.

5. *Could such be the fast I would choose—  
A day for a man to enfeeble himself?  
To hang down his head like a bulrush,  
And spread out sackcloth and ashes.  
Is it this thou would'st call a fast,  
An acceptable day to Yahweh?*
6. *Is not this the fast I have chosen  
—Rede of Yahweh the Lord—<sup>1</sup>  
To open the bonds of wickedness,  
Unlock the fetters of wrong,<sup>2</sup>  
To let the broken go free,  
And that ye burst every yoke.*
7. *Is it not sharing thy bread with the hungry,  
And that thou bring forwandered ones<sup>3</sup> home?  
When thou seest the naked that thou should'st  
clothe him,  
And hide not thyself from thine own flesh?*
8. *Then shall thy light break forth like the dawn,  
And thy healing shall speedily spring,  
And thy righteousness go before thee,  
And the glory of Yahweh shall be thy rereward.*
9. *Then thou shalt call and Yahweh will answer,  
Thou shalt cry, and He say, Behold Me!  
If thou put away from thy midst the yoke,  
Pointing the finger and speaking mischief,*
10. *And bring forth to the hungry thy bread,<sup>4</sup>  
And content the afflicted soul—  
Then shall thy light stream forth in the darkness,  
And thy darkness be as the noonday.*

<sup>1</sup> This line wanting in Heb. but required by the metre is supplied from LXX.

<sup>2</sup> *Wrong* after LXX. Heb. has *the yoke*, probably an inadvertent copy of *yoke* in the second next line.

<sup>3</sup> The Heb. addition of *the poor* seems a gloss on the rare word for *forwandered*.

<sup>4</sup> *Bread*, so LXX. Heb. *soul*, meaningless and another inadvertent copy of a neighbouring word.

- lviii. II. *And Yahweh shall constantly guide thee  
And refresh thy soul*<sup>1</sup> *in the drought,  
And thy strength shall renew,*<sup>2</sup>  
*Till thou be like a garden well watered,  
Like a fountain whose waters fail not.*
12. *And thine ancient wastes again be built,  
And thou raise the foundations of ages,  
And they call thee Repairer of Breaches,  
Restorer of lanes to dwell in.*<sup>3</sup>

And so concludes a passage, which fills the earliest, if not the highest, place in the glorious succession of Scriptures of Practical Love, to which belong the Sixty-first chapter of Isaiah, the Twenty-fifth of Matthew, and the Thirteenth of First Corinthians. Its lesson is,—to go back to the figure of the dragged rose,—that no mere forms of religion, however divinely prescribed or conscientiously observed, can of themselves lift the distraught and trailing affections of man to the light and peace of Heaven ; but that our fellow-men, if we cling to them with love and with arms of help, are ever the strongest props by which we may rise to God ; that character grows rich and life joyful, not by the performance of ordinances with the cold conscience of duty, but by acts of service with the warm heart of love.

And yet such a prophecy concludes with an exhortation to the observance of one religious form, and places

<sup>1</sup> *Soul* perhaps more fitly rendered here by *desire* or *thirst*.

<sup>2</sup> So most moderns read following Secker and Lowth. Heb. *thy bones shall He brace*.

<sup>3</sup> Some, too nicely objecting to the conjunction of *paths* and *dwelling*, have followed Lagarde in substituting for *paths* a Hebrew word not elsewhere occurring, *wrecks* or *ruins*. But in English translation *lanes* may be used instead of *paths*. Alternatively, *dwell in* might be taken in the sense of *abide* or *endure* (Ps. cxxv. 1).

the keeping of the Sabbath on a level with the practice of love.

13. *If thou turn off thy foot from the Sabbath,  
From<sup>1</sup> doing thine own business on My Holy  
Day,  
And call the Sabbath a joy,  
And the holy of Yahweh honourable,  
And honour it by keeping off ways of thine own,  
Off finding thine own business and chaffering,*
14. *Then thou shalt have thy pleasure in Yahweh  
And I will bring thee to ride on earth's heights,  
And feed thee on the heritage of Jacob thy father,  
For the mouth of Yahweh hath spoken.*

Our prophet, then, while exalting the practical Service of Man at the expense of certain religious forms, equally exalts the observance of Sabbath; his scorn for their formalism changes when he comes to it into a strenuous enthusiasm of defence. This remarkable fact, which is strictly analogous to the appearance of the Fourth Commandment in a code otherwise consisting of purely moral and religious laws, is easily explained. Observe that our prophet bases his plea for Sabbath-keeping, and his assurance that it must lead to prosperity, not on its physical, moral, or social benefits, but simply upon its acknowledgement of God. Not only is the Sabbath to be honoured because it is the *Holy of Yahweh* and *Honourable*, but *making it one's pleasure* is equivalent to *finding one's pleasure in Him*. The parallel between these two phrases in ver. 13 and ver. 14 is evident, and means really this: Inasmuch as ye do it unto the Sabbath, ye do it unto Me. The

<sup>1</sup> *From*, so LXX; *business*, lit. *purposes*, so many MSS.

prophet, then, enforces the Sabbath simply on account of its religious and Godward aspect. Now, let us remember the truth, which he so often enforces, that the Service of Man, however ardently and widely pursued, can never lead or sum up our duty ; that the Service of God has, logically and practically, a prior claim, for without it the Service of Man must suffer both in obligation and in resource. God must be our first resort—must have our first homage, affection, and obedience. But this cannot well take place without some amount of definite and regular and frequent devotion to Him. In the most spiritual religion there is an irreducible minimum of formal observance. Now, in that wholesale destruction of religious forms, which took place at the overthrow of Jerusalem,<sup>1</sup> there was only one institution, which was not necessarily involved. The Sabbath did not fall with the Temple and the Altar: the Sabbath was independent of all locality ; the Sabbath was possible even in exile. It was the one solemn, public, and frequently regular form in which the nation could turn to God, glorify Him, and enjoy Him. Perhaps, too, through the Babylonian fashion of solemnising the seventh day, our prophet realised again the primitive institution of the Sabbath, and was reminded that, since seven days is a regular part of the natural year, the Sabbath is, so to speak, sanctioned by the statutes of Creation.

An institution, which is so primitive, which is so independent of locality, which forms so natural a part of the course of time, but which, above all, has twice—in the Jewish Exile and in the passage of Judaism to Christianity—survived the abrogation and disappearance of all other forms of the religion with which it was

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 61 f.

connected, and has twice been affirmed by prophecy or practice to be an essential part of spiritual religion and the equal of social morality,—has amply proved its Divine origin and its indispensableness to man.

### III. SOCIAL CRIMES (chap. lix)

Chap. lix is, at first sight, the most difficult of all of 'Second Isaiah' to assign to a date.<sup>1</sup> For it contains both pre-exilic and exilic elements, and may also be partly post-exilic. On the one hand, its charges of guilt imply that the people addressed by it are responsible for civic justice to a degree, which could hardly be imputed to the Jews in Babylon. We saw that the Jews in the Exile had an amount of social freedom and domestic responsibility which amply accounts for the kind of sins they are charged with in chap. lviii. But ver. 14 of chap. lix reproaches them with the collapse of justice in the very seat and public office of justice, of which it was not possible they could have been guilty except in their own land and in the days of their independence. On the other hand, the promises of deliverance in chap. lix read very much as if they were exilic. *Judgement* and *righteousness* are employed in ver. 9 in their exilic sense,<sup>2</sup> and God is pictured exactly as we have seen Him in other chapters of our prophet.

Are we then left with a mystery? On the contrary, the solution is clear. Israel is followed into exile by

<sup>1</sup> Ewald conceives chs. lviii, lix to be the work of a younger contemporary of Ezekiel, to which the chief author of 'Second Isaiah' has added words of his own: lviii. 12, lix. 21. The latter is evidently an insertion; cf. change of person and of number, etc. Delitzsch puts the passage down to the last decade of the Captivity, when for a little time Cyrus had turned away from Babylon, and the Jews despaired of his coming to save them. Criticism since then has mainly tended to a post-exilic date.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 236 ff.



her old conscience. The charges of Isaiah and Ezekiel against Jerusalem, while Jerusalem was still a 'civitas,' ring in her memory. She repeats the very words. With truth she says that her present state, so vividly described in vv. 9-11, is due to sins of old, of which, though perhaps she can no longer commit them, she still feels the guilt. Conscience always crowds the years together; there is no difference of time in the eyes of God the Judge. And it was natural, as we have said already, that the nation should remember her besetting sins at this time; that her civic conscience should awake again, just as she was again about to become a civitas.<sup>1</sup>

The whole of this chapter is simply the expansion and enforcement of the first two verses, that keep clanging like the clangour of a great, high bell: *Behold, Yahweh's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither*

<sup>1</sup> Another slight trace reveals the conglomerate nature of the chapter. If, as the earlier verses indicate, it was Israel that sinned, then it is the rebellious in Israel who should be punished. In ver. 18*a*, therefore, the *adversaries* or *enemies* ought to be Israelites. But in 18*b* the foreign *islands* are included. The LXX has not this addition. Bredenkamp takes the words for an insertion. Yet the consequences of Israel's sin, according to the chapter, are not so much the punishment of the rebellious among the people as the delay of the deliverance for the whole nation,—a deliverance which Yahweh is represented as rising to accomplish, the moment the people express the sense of their rebellion and are penitent. The *adversaries* and *enemies* of ver. 18 might therefore have been taken to be the oppressors of Israel, foreign and heathen; and 18*b* with its *islands* added quite naturally.

*Note on mishpat and Sedhakāh in ch. lix.* This chapter is a good one for studying the various meanings of mishpat. In ver. 4 the verb shaphat is used in its simplest sense of going to law. In vv. 8 and 14 mishpat is a quality or duty of man. But in ver. 9 it is rather what man expects from God, and what is far from man because of his sins; it is *judgement* on God's side, or God's saving ordinance. In this sense it is possibly to be taken in ver. 15. Sedhakāh follows the same parallel. This goes to prove that we have two distinct prophecies amalgamated unless we believe that a play upon the words is intended.

*is His ear heavy that it cannot hear ; but your iniquities have been separators between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, that He will not hear.*

There is but one thing that comes between the human heart and the Real Presence and Infinite Power of God ; and that one thing is Sin. The chapter labours to show how real God is. Its opening verses talk of *His Hand, His Ear, His Face*. And the closing verses paint Him with the passions and the armour of a man,—a Hero in such solitude and with such forward force, that no imagination can fail to see the Vivid, Lonely Figure. Do not let us suppose this is mere poetry. Conceive what inspires it,—the great truth that in the Infinite there is a heart to throb for men and a will to strike for them. This is what the writer desires to proclaim, and what we believe the Spirit of God moved his poor human lips to give their own shape to,—the simple truth that there is One, however hidden He may be to men's eyes, who feels for men, who feels hotly for men, and whose will is quick and urgent to save them. Such an One tells His people, that the only thing which prevents them from knowing how real His heart and will are—the only thing which prevents them from seeing His work in their midst—is their sin.

The roll of sins to which the prophet attributes the delay of the people's deliverance is an awful one ; and the man who reads it with conscience asleep might conclude that it was meant only for a period of extraordinary violence and bloodshed. Yet the chapter implies that society exists, and that at least the forms of civilisation are in force. Men sue one another before the usual courts. But none *sueth in righteousness or goeth to the law in truth. They trust in vanity and speak lies.* All these charges might be true of a society as outwardly respectable as our own. Nor is the charge

of bloodshed to be taken literally. The Old Testament has so great a regard for the spiritual nature of man, that to deny the individual his rights or to take away the peace of God from his heart, it calls the shedding of innocent blood. Isaiah reminds us of many kinds of this moral murder when he says, *your hands are full of blood: seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.* Ezekiel reminds us of others when he tells how God spake to him, that if he *warn not the wicked, and the same wicked shall die in his iniquity, his blood will I require at thy hand.* And again a Psalm reminds us of the time *when the Lord maketh inquisition for blood, He forgetteth not the cry of the poor.*<sup>1</sup> This is what the Bible calls murder and lays its burning words upon,—not such acts of bloody violence as now and then make all humanity thrill to discover that in the heart of civilisation there exist men with the passions of the ape and the tiger, but such oppression of the poor, such cowardice to rebuke evil, such negligence to restore the falling, such abuse of the characters of the young and innocent, such fraud and oppression of the weak, as often exist under the most respectable life, and employ the weapons of a Christian civilisation in order to fulfil themselves. We have need to take the bold, violent standards of the prophets and lay them to our own lives,—the prophets that call the man who sells his honesty for gain a harlot and hold him blood-guilty who has wronged, tempted, or neglected his brother. *He who loveth not, says John, abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.*

The metre is the same as before in lines of equal length, but the last verse approaches the *Ḳinah* :—

<sup>1</sup> Isa. i. 17; Ezek. ii. 18; Psalm ix. 12.

- lix. 1. *Lo, not too short to save is Yahweh's hand,  
Nor too heavy His ear to hear.*
2. *But your iniquities are the dividers  
Between yourselves and your God.  
And your sins have hidden the Presence<sup>1</sup>  
From you that He will not hear.*
3. *For your hands are fouled with blood  
And your fingers with crime ;  
Your lips, they speak but falsehood,  
Your tongue is muttering mischief ;*
4. *No one is sueing<sup>2</sup> in righteousness  
And no one pleads<sup>2</sup> with honesty,  
Trusting to disorder and speaking vanity,  
Conceiving trouble and bringing forth mischief.*
5. *Basilisk's eggs they hatch,  
And webs of the spider they weave ;  
He who eats of their eggs shall die,  
And if one be tramped on hatched is a viper.*
6. *Their webs cannot serve for a garment,  
And no one could clothe him in works of theirs.  
Their works are works of bale,  
And the doing of violence lies to their hands.*
7. *Their feet run to evil  
And they haste to shed innocent<sup>3</sup> blood.  
Their thoughts are thoughts of bale,  
Wrecking and ruin upon their high ways !*
8. *The way of peace they never have known,  
Law<sup>4</sup> there is none in their ongoings ;  
Their paths they make crooked for themselves,  
Whoso travels thereon he knows no peace.<sup>5</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *the face*. Some read *His face*, unnecessarily.

<sup>2</sup> *Sueing, pleads*—forensic terms.

<sup>3</sup> LXX omits *innocent*.

<sup>4</sup> *Law*, Heb. *mishpat*; see p. 456 n.

<sup>5</sup> Vv. 6–8 contain a series of phrases all found in the Bk. of Proverbs, and some frequently: *feet running to evil, shedding innocent blood, their ongoings, make crooked paths*. Budde and many others suppose these verses as the work of another hand taken up into the poem.

- lix. 9. *Therefore far off from us is judgement<sup>1</sup>  
And righting does not overtake us.  
We wait for light—but darkness behold !  
For brightening—in the dark we trudge on.*
10. *We grope by the wall like the blind,  
Like the eyeless we grope.  
We stumble at noon as if in the gloaming,  
Amid the lusty like those that are dead.*
11. *All of us growl like bears,  
And like doves keep moaning, moaning.  
For judgement we wait, there is none,  
For salvation, 'tis far away from us.*
12. *For our rebellions throng up before Thee,  
And our sin bears witness against us ;  
Our rebellions are also with our own selves,  
And we own our iniquities.*
13. *Rebellion and denial of Yahweh  
And turning from after our God ;  
Speaking perversion, defection,  
Muttering lies without conscience,*
14. *And fallen away back is Law  
And righteousness stays afar,  
For truth has tripped on the court,  
Straightforwardness cannot get in ;*
15. *So the truth has gone by default,<sup>2</sup>  
And who turns from evil makes prey of himself.  
And Yahweh saw and was grieved at the sight  
That Law there was none.*
16. *And He saw that there was not a man,  
Was amazed there was none to strike in,  
So His own arm wrought Him salvation,  
And His righteousness it upheld Him.*

<sup>1</sup> *Judgement, mishpat, i.e. for us ; in next line righting is righteousness in its objective sense.*

<sup>2</sup> *Lit. amissing.*



17. *Righting He put on as a breastplate,  
On His head the helmet of victory,  
Yea, He put on the garments of vengeance <sup>1</sup>  
And wrapped Him in zeal as a mantle.*
18. *According to deserts recompense <sup>2</sup> He pays  
Fury to His enemies, dishonour <sup>3</sup> to His foes.<sup>4</sup>*
19. *So shall they see <sup>5</sup> Yahweh's Name from the  
sunset,  
And from the rising of the sun His glory.  
For like to a pent-up flood shall it come,  
The breath of Yahweh driving it on.*
20. *And for <sup>6</sup> Sion shall come a Redeemer,  
And turn off ungodliness <sup>7</sup> in Jacob.*

An addition, probably by another hand:—

21. *And I—this is My Covenant with them  
Yahweh sayeth :  
My Spirit which is upon thee  
And My Words I set in thy mouth,  
They shall not depart from thy mouth  
Nor the mouth of thy seed,  
Nor the mouth of the seed of thy seed,  
Saith Yahweh from now evermore.*

Whatever may have been the dates and original purposes of these poems, lvi. 9–lix, they have been arranged with at least a rational, not to say a very

<sup>1</sup> Heb. adds *as clothing*, which LXX and Vulg. omit.

<sup>2</sup> So Targ., followed by Cheyne and others.

<sup>3</sup> So Klostermann and others after LXX; Heb. *requital*.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. adds *to the isles he will pay requital*: obviously a gloss; LXX omits.

<sup>5</sup> So some MSS.; or with other points *fear*.

<sup>6</sup> LXX *on account of*; Roms. xi. 26 *out of*.

<sup>7</sup> *Ungodliness*. So LXX and Roms. xi. 26; Heb. adds *Rede of Yahweh*; omit with LXX.



spiritual intention—the exposure of a very evil generation, God’s indictment of it, a great revelation of the Divine Nature, and a sharp distinction of the characters and fate of men. The generation is one which has lost its God, but kept its conscience—a conscience sensitive but unenlightened and morbid. They were people who put energy into their religion, and passion and sacrifice that went to cruel lengths. And their fierce faith kept them from fainting under the weariness in which their fanaticism reacted.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### SALVATION IN SIGHT

ISAIAH LX-LXIII. 6

THE deliverance from Babylon has long been assured since chap. xlviii; doubts in the way of Return have been removed, chap. xli-xlii. 12; means for the spiritual Restoration of the people have been found, chap. liii and preceding chapters on the Servant; Sion has been hailed from afar, chap. liv; last calls to leave Babylon have been uttered, chap. lv; last councils and comforts, lvi. 1-8; and the civic conscience has been rekindled, lvi. 9-lix. There remains now only to take possession of the City herself; to rehearse the vocation of the restored people; and to realise the hopes, fears, hindrances, and practical problems of the future. These occupy the rest of our prophecy, chaps. lx-lxvi.

Chap. lx is a prophecy as complete in itself as chap. liv. The City, which in liv was hailed and comforted from afar, is in lx bidden rise and enjoy the glory that is at last to reach her. Her splendours, hinted at in liv, are seen in full display. In lxi-lxii her prophet, her genius and representative, rehearses to her his duties, and sets forth her place among the peoples. And in lxiii. 1-7 we have another of those theophanies or appearances of the Sole Divine Author

of His people's salvation, which, abrupt and separate as if to heighten the sense of the solitariness of their subject, occur at intervals throughout our prophecy: for instance, in xlii. 10-17, and in lix. 16-19. These three sections, lx, lxi-lxii, and lxiii. 1-7, we take together in this chapter of our volume.

The first, chap. lx, is a poem of more or less regular lines, which sometimes tend towards the *Kinah* measure (vv. 2, 10 first couplets in each, 11 second couplet, 14, and from the last couplet of 17 to the end of 20). It is divisible into strophes of eight lines each. The Return from Exile is imminent if not actual: whether none or few have yet returned is uncertain. The walls are not yet rebuilt (10) nor possibly the Temple (13). Echoes of chaps. xl-lv have led some moderns to see in the poem the very hand of the great prophet of the Exile; but these may be due as probably to a follower of him, eager to rouse his optimism in the people somewhat disappointed with its results, as to himself. In any case the date may reasonably be fixed before 500 B.C.

### I. ARISE, SHINE (chap. lx)

The Sixtieth chapter of Isaiah is the spiritual counterpart of a typical Eastern day, with the dust laid and the darts taken out of the sunbeams,—a typical Eastern day in the sudden splendour of its dawn, the completeness and apparent permanence of its noon, the spaciousness it reveals on sea and land, and the barbaric profusion of life, which its strong light is sufficient to flood with glory.

Under such a day we see Jerusalem. In the first five verses she is addressed, as in liv, as a crushed and desolate woman. But her lonely night is over, and from some prophet—as if at the head of her returning children—the cry peals:—

- lx. 1. *Arise, shine ! For thy light is come,  
And the glory of Yahweh is risen upon thee !*
2. *For behold, the darkness covers the earth,  
And clouds of darkness the peoples,  
But upon thee Yahweh arises,  
And His glory shews forth about thee.*
3. *So nations shall come to thy light,  
And kings to the beams of thy dawn.*

In the East the sun does not rise, the verb is weak for an arrival almost too sudden for twilight. In the East the sun leaps above the horizon. You feel him not coming, but come. The first verse is suggested by the swiftness with which he bursts on an Eastern city, and her shrouded form does not, as in our gradual twilight, slowly unwrap itself, but *shines* at once all surfaces and pinnacles of glory. Then the figure yields somewhat. Jerusalem is not merely one radiant summit in a world all lighted by the same sun but in a world of darkness she is the only light, and the Gentiles shall draw to her.

In the next two verses it is a mother who is addressed.

4. *Lift up thine eyes around and see  
All of them gather, for thee are they come.  
Thy sons are coming from far,  
And, nursed on the side,<sup>1</sup> thy daughters.*
5. *Then shalt thou see and be radiant,  
And thy heart shall throb and expand,  
For towards thee shall turn the abundance of the sea,  
The wealth of the nations shall come unto thee.*

The fairest verse in the chapter ! The verb which the Authorised Version translates *shall flow together*

<sup>1</sup> So literally, or *on the hip*, an Eastern method of carrying children.

and the Revised *lightened* means both of these. It is liquid light,—light that ripples and sparkles and runs across the face ; as it best appears in that beautiful passage of the thirty-fourth Psalm, *they looked to Him and their faces were lightened*. Here it suggests the light which a face catches from sparkling water. The prophet's figure has changed. The stately mother of her people stands not among the ruins of her city, but upon some great beach, with the sea in front,—the sea that casts up all heaven's light upon her face and drifts all earth's wealth to her feet, and her eyes are upon the horizon with the look of one who watches for the return of her children.

The next verses are simply the expansion of these two clauses,—about the sea's flood and the wealth of the Nations. Vv. 6–9 look first landward and then seaward, as from Jerusalem's own wonderful position on the high range between Asia and the sea ; between the gates of the East and the gates of the West. On the one side the city's horizon is the range of Moab and Edom, that threshold, in Jewish imagination, of the golden East across which pour the caravans here pictured.

- lx. 6. *Profusion of camels shall cover thee,  
Young camels from Midian and Ephah ;  
All they of Sheba shall come,  
[Shall carry gold and frankincense  
And precious stones for thyself.]*<sup>1</sup>  
*And proclaim the triumphs of Yahweh.*
7. *All Kedar's flocks to thee shall be gathered,  
To thee the rams of Nebaioth shall minister,  
Coming up on Mine Altar with acceptance,  
That My House of Prayer be made beautiful.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> So LXXA, completing with the previous line a couplet. But many moderns omit both lines.

<sup>2</sup> LXX and Lat.

These were just what surged over Jordan from the far countries beyond, of which the Jews knew little more than the names here given,—tawny droves of camels upon the greenness of Palestine like a spate of the desert from which they poured; rivers of sheep brimming up the narrow drove-roads to Jerusalem—conceive it all under that blazing Eastern sun. But then turning to Judah's other horizon, marked by the yellow fringe of sand and the blue haze of the sea beyond, the speaker cries:—

8. *Who are these as a cloud that fly,  
And like doves to their windows?*
9. *To Me, to Me<sup>1</sup> the isles are stretching<sup>2</sup>  
With the ships of Tarshish in the van,  
To bring in thy sons from afar,  
Their gold and their silver with them,  
To the Name of Yahweh thy God,  
To the Holy of Israel for beauteous hath He made  
thee.*

The poetry of the Old Testament is said to be deficient in its treatment of the sea; and, indeed, dwells more frequently upon the hills, as was natural for the imagination of an inland and highland people to do. But in what literature will you find passages of equal length more suggestive of the sea than those short pieces in which Hebrew prophets sought to render the futile rage of the world, as it dashed on the steadfast will of God, by the roar and crash of the ocean on the beach; or painted a nation's prosperity as the waves of a summer sea; or described the long

<sup>1</sup> So doubled in some codd. of LXX, and so Budde.

<sup>2</sup> By changing one or two letters Duhm, Budde, Cheyne, etc., read *to Me the ships (or shipmen) are faring* (in order to fit the next line), but LXX supports the Heb. text. *Isles or coastlands*, see pp. 111 f.



coastlands as stretching out to God, and the white-sailed ships coming in like doves to their windows ! <sup>1</sup>

The rest of the chapter is occupied with the rebuilding and adornment of Jerusalem, and the nation's establishment in righteousness and peace. There is a mingling of the material and the moral. The Gentiles are to become subject to the Jew, but in voluntary submission before the evidence of Jerusalem's spiritual authority. Nothing is said of a Messiah or a King. Jerusalem is to be a commonwealth ; and, while her *government shall be Peace and her ruling-powers Right*, God Himself, in evident presence, is to be her light and glory. Thus the chapter ends with God and the People, and nothing else. God for an everlasting light around, and the people in their land, righteous, secure and growing very large.

lx. 10. *And strangers shall build thy walls  
And their kings shall minister unto thee,  
For it was in My wrath I smote thee,  
And in My grace I shew thee mercy.*

11. *Thy gates shall stand constantly open,<sup>2</sup>  
Day and night they shall not be shut,  
To bring thee the wealth of the nations,  
With their kings in leading.<sup>3</sup>*

13. *The glory of Lebanon shall come to thee.  
Pine-tree and elm and box-tree <sup>4</sup> together.  
To make beautiful the place of My Sanctuary,  
That the place of My feet I may glorify.*

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xvii. 12-14 ; xlviii. 18 ; lx. 8.

<sup>2</sup> So the Versions ; Heb. *shall constantly open thy gates*.

<sup>3</sup> Lit. *led*, the passive participle ; but with Knobel some, by a change of vowels, would read the act. part. : *their kings leading* them. The next verse, 12, is a clumsily formed interruption, probably by a later hand. With most moderns, I omit it.

<sup>4</sup> The identifications of the three Hebrew names here is uncertain. LXX translates cypress, pine, and cedar.

14. *And shall come to thee bending the sons of thine oppressors,  
And all thy despisers bow down to the soles of thy feet ;<sup>1</sup>  
And they shall call thee the City of Yahweh,  
Sion of the Holy of Israel.*
15. *Instead of thy being forsaken,  
And abhorred with never a visitor,<sup>2</sup>  
I will make thee a pride for ever,  
A joy from age to age.*
16. *Thou shalt suck the milk of nations,  
Yea the breasts of kings shalt thou suck,  
And know that I, Yahweh, I am thy Saviour,  
Thy Redeemer, the Mighty of Jacob.*
17. *For copper I will bring in gold,  
And for iron bring silver,<sup>3</sup>  
And appoint as thy government Peace,  
And Right as thy ruling powers.*
18. *Violence no more shall be heard in thy land,  
Wrecking and ruin within thy borders.  
But thy walls thou shalt call Salvation,  
And thy gates Renown.*
19. *No more shall the sun be thine for light,<sup>4</sup>  
Nor for brightness the moon illumine thee,  
But Yahweh shall be to thee light for ever,  
And thy God thy glory.*

<sup>1</sup> LXX omits this line.

<sup>2</sup> Lit. *with none to pass over or through thee* ; LXX reads *helper*, and so Budde.

<sup>3</sup> Here follows in the Heb. a couplet rightly suspected as a later addition : it is lame in itself, and disturbs the regular arrangement of strophes of eight lines each.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. adds *by day*, and LXX and Lat. add *by night* in the next line. Omit both.

lx. 20. *No more shall thy sun go down,  
And thy moon shall not wane,  
For Yahweh shall be to thee light for ever.  
And the days of thy mourning are ended.*

21. *Thy people, too, shall all be righteous,  
And possess the land for aye,  
A branch of Yahweh's <sup>1</sup> planting  
The work of His hands to His Glory.*

22. *The least shall become a tribe,<sup>2</sup>  
And the smallest a powerful nation ;  
I, Yahweh, I have spoken (?)  
In its time I will hasten it on.*

This chapter has been put through many interpretations to many uses : to describe the ingathering of the Gentiles to the Church (in the Christian year it is the Lesson for the Epiphany), to prove the doctrine that the Church should live by endowments from the kingdoms of this world, and to enforce the duty of costliness and magnificence in the public worship of God.

The last of these duties we may extend and qualify. If the coming in of the Gentiles is here represented as bringing wealth to the Church, we cannot help remembering that the going out to the Gentiles, in order to bring them in, means for us the spending of our wealth on things other than the adornment of temples ; and that, besides the heathen, there are the poor and suffering for whom God asks men's gold, as He asked it in olden days for the temple, that He may be glorified. Take that fine phrase : *And*—with all that wealth which has flowed in from Lebanon, Midian, and Sheba

<sup>1</sup> So most moderns. Heb. *my* or *his*.

<sup>2</sup> Or *a thousand*.

—*I will make the place of My feet glorious.* When this singular name was first uttered it was limited to the dwelling-place of the Ark and Presence of God, visible only on Mount Sion. But when God became man, and did indeed tread with human feet this world of ours, what were then the *places of His feet*? Sometimes, it is true, the Temple, but only sometimes; far more often where the sick lay, and the bereaved were weeping,—the pool of Bethesda, the death-room of Jairus' daughter, the way to the centurion's sick servant, the city gates where the beggars stood, the lanes where the village folk had gathered, against His coming, their deaf and dumb, palsied and lunatic. These were *the places of His feet, who Himself bare our sicknesses and carried our infirmities*; and these are what He would seek our wealth to make glorious. They say that the reverence of men builds no such cathedrals as of old; nay, but the love of man, which Christ taught, builds far more of those refuges and houses of healing, scatters far more widely those medicines for the body, those instruments of teaching, those means of grace, in which God is as much glorified as in Jewish Temple or Christian Cathedral.

Nevertheless He, who set *the place of His feet*, which He would have us to glorify, among the poor and the sick, was He, who also did not for Himself refuse that alabaster box and that precious ointment, which might have been sold for much and given to the poor. The worship of God, if we read Scripture aright, ought to be more than merely grave and comely. There should be heartiness and lavishness about it. Not of material gifts alone or chiefly, but of human faculties, graces, and feeling; of joy and music and the sense of beauty. Take this chapter. It is wonderful, not so much for the material wealth which it devotes to the service of

God's house, and which is all that many eyes ever see in it, as for the glorious imagination and heart for the beautiful, the joy in light and space and splendour, the poetry and the music, which use those material things simply as the light uses the wick, or as music uses the lyre, to express and reveal itself. What a call this chapter is to let out the natural wonder and poetry of the heart, its feeling and music and exultation—*all that is within us*, as the Psalmist says—in the Service of God. Why do we not do so? The answer is very simple. Because, unlike this prophet, we do not realise how present and full our salvation is; because, unlike him, we do not realise that *our light has come*, and so we will not *arise and shine*.

## II. THE GOSPEL (chaps. lxi–lxii)

The speaker in chap. lxi is not introduced by name. Therefore he may be the prophet himself, or he may be the Servant. The present expositor, while feeling that the evidence is not conclusive against either of these, and that the uncertainty is as great as in chap. xlvi. 16,<sup>1</sup> inclines to think that there is, on the whole,

<sup>1</sup> See p. 227, note. Some points of the speaker's description of himself—for example, the gift of the Spirit and the anointing—suit equally any prophet, or the unique Servant. The mission and its results are not too lofty or great for our prophet, for Jeremiah received his office in terms as large. That the prophet has not yet spoken at such length in his own person is no reason why he should not do so now, especially as he is summing up and enforcing the whole range of prophecy. It can, therefore, well be the prophet who speaks. On the other hand, to say with Diestel that it cannot be the Servant because the personification of the Servant ceases with ch. liii. is to beg the question. A stronger argument against the case for the Servant is that the speaker does not call himself by that name, as he does in other passages where he is introduced; but this is not conclusive, for in l. 4–9 the Servant, though he speaks, does not name himself. To these may be added this (from Krüger), that the Servant's discourse never passes without transition into that of God,



less objection to its being the prophet who speaks than to its being the Servant. See the appended note. But the question which is intended is not important, for the Servant was representative of prophecy; and if it be the prophet who speaks here, he speaks with the conscience of the function and aim of the whole prophetic order. That Jesus Christ fulfilled this programme does not decide the question; for a prophet so representative was as much the antetype of Christ as the Servant himself was. On the whole, we must be content to feel about this passage, what we must have already felt about others in our prophecy, that the writer is more anxious to place before us the range and ideal of the prophetic gift than to make clear in whom this ideal is realised; and for the rest Jesus of Nazareth so plainly fulfilled it, that it becomes a minor question whom the writer may have intended as its first application.

If chap. lx set forth the external glory of God's people, chap. lxi opens with the consciousness of a spiritual mission to them (1-3). There the building of Zion and enrichment of the Temple, that Yahweh may glorify His people, here the binding of broken hearts and gladdening of spirits in mourning, that *He may glorify Himself*. But this spiritual mission also issues in external splendour: rebuilding, submission

as this speaker's in ver. 8, but the prophet's discourse often so passes; and this, that **קרא בשׁוֹר**, and **נחם** are often used of the prophet, and not at all of the Servant. These are all the points in the question, and it will be seen how inconclusive they are. If further proof of this were required, it would be found in the fact that authorities are equally divided. There hold for the Servant Calvin, Delitzsch, Cheyne (who previously took the other view), Driver, Briggs, Nägelsbach, Orelli, and Box. But the Targum, Ewald, Hitzig, Diestel, Dillmann, Bredenkamp, Krüger, Duhm, Budde, Skinner, Marti, Edghill, Workman, and A. R. Gordon hold by the prophet. Krüger's reasons, *Essai sur la Théologie d'Isaïe xl-lxvi*, p. 76, are specially worthy of attention.



of the heathen, a doubled land, acknowledgement by the heathen of those divine blessings. (4-9) ; along with Israel's praise for a *righteousness* or *righting* that shall be like the spring (10, 11).

- lxi. 1. *The spirit of Yahweh the Lord is upon me,  
Because He <sup>1</sup> hath anointed me ;  
He sent me to bring to the wretched good tidings,  
To bind up the broken of heart,  
To proclaim to the captives freedom  
And a full release to the bound,<sup>2</sup>*
2. *To proclaim for Yahweh a year of grace,  
And for our God a day of vengeance.*
- To comfort all who mourn.<sup>3</sup>*
3. *To appoint unto them that mourn in Sion,  
To give them a garland for ashes,<sup>4</sup>  
Oil of joy for the weeds of mourning,  
A song of praise for a fainting <sup>5</sup> spirit ;  
That men may call them Oaks-of-Righteousness,  
The-Planting-of-Yahweh that He may be glorified.*
4. *And they shall rebuild the ancient wastes,  
Raise up the primitive desolations,  
And renew the ruined townships,  
Desolations of age upon age.*
5. *And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks,  
And aliens shall be your plowmen and vine-  
dressers ;*

<sup>1</sup> So LXX ; Heb. *Yahweh*.

<sup>2</sup> LXX *opening of eyes to the blind* ; and so Cheyne.

<sup>3</sup> A line by itself unlike the rest. Some delete it, others the next line.

<sup>4</sup> *Garland* (so R.V.), or *turban of honour, for ashes*. A play upon words, *a coronal for a coronach* (Box, similarly Moffatt) ; *Putz statt Schmutz* (Duhm, etc.).

<sup>5</sup> Same as *flickering* in xlii. 3.

6. *But ye shall be called The Priests of Yahweh,  
Ministers of our God shall be said of you.*

*Ye shall feed on the wealth of nations,  
And unto their glory succeed.<sup>1</sup>*

7. *Because of the doubled shame that was theirs,  
And insult and spitting their portion,<sup>2</sup>  
So in their land they double shall own,  
Joy everlasting be theirs.*

8. *For I, Yahweh, am a lover of justice,<sup>3</sup>  
Hating iniquitous <sup>4</sup> robbery.  
I shall faithfully give them their meed,  
And make them an eternal covenant.*

9. *And their seed shall be known in the nations,  
And their offspring amidst the peoples.  
All who see shall acknowledge them,  
That they are a seed Yahweh hath blessed.*

10. *I will indeed rejoice in Yahweh,  
Exult shall my soul in my God ;  
For He hath put on me the garments of salvation,  
In the robe of righting <sup>6</sup> he wraps me.<sup>5</sup>*

11. *For as the earth brings out her buds,  
And the garden makes spring her sowings,  
So shall Yahweh the Lord make righting <sup>6</sup> spring,  
And renown before all the nations.*

<sup>1</sup> *Succeed*—so, accepting the Heb. text, Duhm, Marti, and, less confidently, Budde. Others read *honour* or *adorn yourselves* (Cheyne, Box) or *boast yourselves* (some Versions and A.V.).

<sup>2</sup> So this couplet is now generally rendered. It is the best that can be made of a corrupt text and an obviously intended meaning.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *mishpat*.

<sup>4</sup> So some Heb. MSS., LXX, Targ., Syr. Heb. with other vowels reads *for burnt-offering*.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. adds the couplet: *as a bridegroom prepares him a head-dress and a bride adorns herself with jewels*—is taken here by most, and probably correctly, as a gloss or note on the preceding couplet.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. *righteousness*, but in both cases obviously in its objective sense.

There are heard here all the keynotes of our prophets, and clear, too, is that favourite direction of their thought from the spiritual influences to the outward splendour and evidence, from the comfort and healing of the heart to the rich garment, the renown, and their dearest vision of great forest trees,—in short, Yahweh Himself breaking into glory. One point needs special attention.

The prophet begins his commission by these words, *to bring good tidings to the afflicted*, and again says, *to proclaim to the captive*. *The afflicted*, or *the poor*, as it is mostly rendered, is the classical name for God's people in Exile. We have sufficiently moved among this people to know for what reason the *bringing of good tidings* should here be reckoned as the first and most indispensable service that prophecy could render them. In the life of every nation there are hours, when the factors of destiny, that loom largest at other times, dwindle before the momentousness of a piece of news,—hours, when the nation's attitude in a great moral issue, or her whole freedom and destiny, are determined by telegrams from the seat of war. The simultaneous news of Grant's capture of Vicksburg and Meade's defeat of Lee, news that finally turned English opinion, so long shamefully wavering, to the side of God and the slave; the telegrams from the army, for which silent crowds waited in the Berlin squares through the autumn nights of 1870, conscious that the unity and birthright of Germany hung upon the tidings; or the announcement in August, 1914, that the British Government had decided to support, by force of arms, its pledge to defend the inviolableness of Belgium; or the news, in 1917, that the United States, after long patience with the Germans, had, in their deliberation, decided that our decision was right,

and resolved to join us—are instances of the vital and paramount influence in a nation's history of a piece of news. The force of a great debate, the expression of public opinion through all its organs, the voice of a people in a general election, things in their time as ominous as the Fates, all yield at certain supreme moments to the meaning of a simple message from Providence. Now it was for *news* from God that Israel waited in Exile; for tidings and the proclamation of fact. They had a Divine Law, but no mere exposition of it could satisfy men who were captives and waited for the order for their freedom. They had Psalms, but no music could console them: *How should we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?* They had Prophecy, with its assurance of the love and the power of their God; and much as there was in it to help them to patience and hope, general statements were not enough for them. They needed the testimony of a fact. Freedom and Restoration had been promised: they waited for the good news that these had arrived. Now our prophecy is mainly this proclamation and good news of fact. It uses before all other words two, —to call or proclaim, *ḥara*, and to tell tidings, *bisser*. We found them in chap. xl, we again find them here when the mission of prophecy is summed up. A third goes with them, *to comfort*, *naham*, but it is the accompaniment, and they are the burden, of this prophecy.

But *good tidings* and the *proclamation* meant so much more than the mere political deliverance of Israel—the fact of their pardon, the tale of the love of their God. His provision for them, and His passion and triumph on their behalf—that it is no wonder that these two words came to be ever after the classical terms for all speech and prophecy from God to man. We actually owe to this time the Greek words of the

New Testament for *gospel* and *preaching*. The Greek term, from which we have *evangel*, *evangelist*, and *evangelise*, originally meant good news, but was first employed in a religious sense by the Greek translation of our prophecies. And our word 'preach' is the heir, though not the lineal descendant, through the Latin *prædicare* and the Greek *κηρυσσεν*, of the word, translated in chap. lx *proclaim*, but in chap. xl *call* or *cry*. It is to the Exile that we trace the establishment among God's people of preaching side by side with sacramental and liturgical worship; for in the Exile the Synagogue arose, whose pulpit was to become as much the centre of Israel's life as the altar or the Temple. And it was from the pulpit of a synagogue centuries after, when preaching had become dry exposition or hard lawgiving, that Jesus re-read our prophecy and affirmed again the *good news* of God.

What is true of nations is true of individuals. We indeed support our life by principles; we develop it by argument; we cannot lay too heavy stress upon philosophy and law. But there is something of greater concern than either argument or the abstract principles from which it is developed; something that our reason cannot find of itself, that our conscience but increases our longing for. It is, whether certain things are facts or not; whether, for instance, the Supreme Power of the Universe is on the side of the individual combatant for righteousness; whether God is love; whether Sin is forgiven; whether Sin and Death have ever been conquered; whether the summer has come in which humanity may put forth their shoots conscious that all the influence of heaven is on their side; or whether, there being no heavenly favours, man must train his virtue and coax his happiness to ripen behind shelters and in conservatories of his own construction. Now



Christ comes to us with the good news of God that the first of these alternatives is the real one. The supreme force in the Universe is on man's side, and for man has won victory and achieved freedom. God has proclaimed pardon. A Saviour has overcome sin and death. We are free to break from evil. The struggle after holiness is not the struggle of a weakly plant in an alien soil and beneath a wintry sky, counting only upon the precarious aids of human cultivation. Summer has come, the acceptable year of the Lord has begun, and all the favour of the Almighty is on His people's side. These are the *good tidings* and *proclamation* of God, and to every man who believes them they must make an incalculable difference in life.

In chap. lxii we have probably the same speaker as in chap. lxi, and he continues steadily in his proclamation of the outward blessings which shall follow the spiritual influences of his mission, his people's vindication in the sight of the nations, their triumph and joyful reunion in the enjoyment of their own fruits and the worship of their God with a final call to pass through the gates not, as most of us used to think, *out* through those of Babylon, but more probably *in* through those of Jerusalem.

- lxii. 1. *For Sion's sake I will not hold my peace,  
And for Jerusalem's I can not keep quiet,  
Until her righting<sup>1</sup> goes forth with a flare,  
And as a blazing torch her salvation.*
2. *And nations shall see thy righting,<sup>1</sup>  
And all the kings thy glory.*  
[*And they shall call thee by a name that is new,  
Which the mouth of Yahweh determines.*]<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Again, righteousness in the sense of *putting in the right*, vindication.

<sup>2</sup> Most moderns (perhaps rightly) delete this couplet as merely a note to ver. 4.



- lxii. 3. *And thou shalt be a crown of beauty in Yahweh's hand,  
And a royal circlet <sup>1</sup> in the palm of thy God.*
4. *Thou shalt no more be termed forsaken,  
Nor thy land still be termed desolate.  
But thou shalt be called Hephšibah,  
And thy land Be'ûlah.<sup>2</sup>  
For Yahweh hath pleasure in thee  
And thy land shall be married.*
5. *For as a young man marries a maiden,  
So shall thy Restorer<sup>3</sup> be married to thee;  
And with the joy of a bridegroom over a bride,  
Over thee thy God shall rejoice.*

Three strophes follow in the *Kinah* verse, two of five couplets each (6, 7; 8, 9) and one of eight (10–12) with a line wanting (the last of 10).

6. *Over thy walls, O Jerusalem,  
I have set watchmen :  
All the day and all the night  
They never are silent.  
Ye that are Yahweh's remembrancers,  
No silence for you !*
7. *And grant ye no silence to Him  
Till He have established,  
And till He have set Jerusalem  
A renown in the earth.*
8. *By His right hand Yahweh hath sworn  
And His powerful arm :  
Not again shall I give up thy corn  
As food to thy foes,*

<sup>1</sup> Or *turban*, lit. something winding or wound.

<sup>2</sup> *Hephši-bah*, My pleasure or purpose in her; *Be'ûlah*, married.

<sup>3</sup> Lit. *thy Builder*; so, since Lowth, most moderns, by changing the vowels of the Heb. word *thy sons*. See xlix. 17. LXX has *sons*.

*Nor shall strangers drink of thy wine  
For which thou hast laboured.*

9. *But they who reap that shall eat it  
And Yahweh praise ;  
And they who gather this shall drink it  
In the courts of My Holiness.*

10. *Pass ye through, pass ye through by the gates,  
Level the way of the people !  
Cast ye up, cast ye up the highway,  
Free it from stones !  
Raise ye a signal over the peoples.*

11. *Lo, Yahweh hath let it be heard  
To the end of the earth :  
Say to the daughter of Sion, Behold,  
Thy salvation is come !  
Behold, His reward is with Him,  
And His meed before Him !*

12. *They shall call them the Holy People,  
The redeemed of Yahweh.  
And thou shalt be called Sought-out,  
A City-not-forsaken.*

### III. THE DIVINE SAVIOUR (chap. lxiii. 1-7)

Once again our prophecies, in another of their periodic transports, turn to hail the Solitary Divine Hero and Saviour of His people.

That the writer of this piece is the main author of the 'Second Isaiah' is possible, both because it is the custom of the latter to describe at intervals the passion and effort of Israel's Mighty One, and because several of his well-known phrases meet us in this piece. The

*speaker in righteousness mighty to save* recalls chap. xlv. 19–24 ; and *the day of vengeance and year of my redeemed* recalls chap. lxi. 2 ; and *I looked, and there was no helper, and I gazed, and there was none to uphold*, recalls lix. 16. The prophet is looking out from Jerusalem towards Edom,—a direction in which the watchmen upon Sion had often in her history looked, both for the appearance of her God and for the return of her armies from the punishment of Israel's congenital and perpetual foe. The prophet, however, sees the prospect filled up, not by the flashing van of a great army, but by a solitary form, without ally, without chariot, without weapons, *swaying on in the wealth of his strength*. The keynote of the piece is the loneliness of this Hero. A figure is used, which, where battle would only have suggested complexity, enthrals us with the spectacle of solitary effort,—the figure of trampling through some vast winefat alone. The Avenging Saviour of Israel has a fierce joy in being alone : it is his nerve to effort and victory,—*therefore Mine own arm brought Me salvation*. We see One great form in the strength of one great conviction. *My righteousness upheld me*.

The interpretation of this chapter by Christians has been very varied, and often perverse. To use the words of Calvin, 'Violenter torserunt hoc caput Christiani.' But, as he rightly sees, it is not the Messiah nor the Servant of Yahweh, who is here pictured, but Yahweh Himself. This Solitary is the Divine Saviour of Israel, as in chap. xlii. 7 f. and in chap. lix. 16 f. In Chapter Eight of this volume we spoke so fully of the Passion of God, that we may now refer to that chapter for the essential truth which underlies our prophet's anthropomorphism, and claims our worship where a short sight might only turn the heart away from the blood-stained surface. One or

two other points, however, demand our attention before we give the translation.

Why does the prophet look in the direction of Edom for the return of his God? Partly, it is to be presumed, because Edom was as good a representative as he could choose of the enemies of Israel other than Babylon. So Edom had been of old and proved to be still on the eve of, and during, the exile.<sup>1</sup> But also partly, perhaps, because of the names which match the red colours of his piece,—the wine and the blood. Edom means *red*, and Bośrah is assonant to Bôşer, a *vine-dresser*.<sup>2</sup> Fitter background and scenery the prophet, therefore, could not have for his drama of Divine Vengeance. But we must take care, as Dillmann properly remarks, not to imagine that any definite, historical invasion of Edom by Israel, or other chastening instrument of Yahweh, is here intended. It is a vision which the prophet sees of Yahweh Himself: it illustrates the passion, the agony, the unshared and unaided effort which the Divine Saviour passes through for His people.

Further, it is only necessary to point out, that the term in ver. 1 given as *splendid* by the Authorised Version, which I have rendered *sweeping*, is literally *swelling*, and is, perhaps, best rendered by *sailing on* or *swinging on*. The other verb which the Revised Version renders *marching* means *swaying*, or moving

<sup>1</sup> See *Isaiah i-xxxix*, pp. 459-461.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Krüger, *Essai sur la Théologie d'Isaïe xl-lxvi*, pp. 154-555. Lagarde proposed to read מַאֲדָם, past participle, for מַאֲדָם and מִבְּצָר for מִבְּצָרָה. *Who is this that cometh dyed red, redder in his garments than a vinedresser?* This reading Oort, Duhm, Gunning, Marti, and Moffatt have accepted; but on the other side, Cheyne, Skinner, Budde, Edghill, and Box retain the readings *from Edom* and from *Bośrah*, for the reasons stated above.

the head or body from one side to another, in the pride and fulness of strength. In ver. 2 *like a wine-treader* is literally *like him that treadeth in the pressing-house*—Geth (the first syllable of Gethsemane, the oil-press). But פוּרָה in ver. 3 is the *pressing-trough*.

lxiii. 1. *Who is this coming from Edom,  
Raw-red his garments from Bosrah !  
This sweeping on in his raiment,  
Swaying<sup>1</sup> in the wealth of his strength ?*

*I that do speak in righteousness,<sup>2</sup>  
Mighty<sup>3</sup> to save !*

2. *Wherefore is red on thy raiment,  
And thy garments like to a wine-treader's ?*

3. *A trough I have trodden alone,  
Of the peoples no man was with me.  
So I trod them down in my wrath,  
And trampled them down in my fury ;  
Their life-blood sprinkled my garments,  
And all my raiment I stained.*

4. *For the day of revenge in My heart,  
And the year of My redeemed<sup>4</sup> has come.  
And I looked, and there was no helper ;*

<sup>1</sup> See above. But Symmachus and Vulgate, by the change of one consonant, read *marching on*, and are followed since Lowth by many moderns.

<sup>2</sup> That is, in *vindication*.

<sup>3</sup> Lit. *manifold* or *rich*. Cheyne and Budde (it seems to me unnecessarily) add *in power*. Symm. and Vulg. read, by altering a vowel-point, *who striveth* or *pleadeth* to save,

<sup>4</sup> Possibly *redemption*.

5. *I gazed, and none to uphold !  
So Mine arm won me salvation ;  
And my righteousness,<sup>1</sup> it hath upheld me.*
6. *So I stamp on the peoples in My wrath,  
And make them drunk with my fury,  
And bring down to earth their life-blood.*

<sup>1</sup> So about 30 Heb. MSS. ; Heb. *fury*, but this comes in later.



## CHAPTER XXV

### A LAST INTERCESSION AND THE JUDGEMENT

ISAIAH LXIII. 7-LXVI

WE might have thought, that with the section we have been considering, the prophecy of Israel's Redemption had reached its summit and end. The glory of Sion in sight, the Divine Saviour hailed in the urgency of His feeling for His people, in the sufficiency of His might to save them,—what more can the prophecy give us? Why does it not finish upon these high notes? The answer is, the salvation is indeed consummate, but the people are not ready for it. On an earlier occasion when our prophet called the nation to their Service of God, he called at first the whole nation, but had immediately to make a distinction. In the light of their destiny, the mass of Israel proved to be unworthy; tried by its strain, part soon fell away. But what happened upon that call to Service happens again upon this disclosure of Salvation. The prophet realises that it is only a part of Israel who are worthy of it. He feels again what has been the hindrance to hope all through—the weight of the mass of the nation, sunk in idolatry and wickedness, incapable of appreciating the promises. Prophecy must make one more effort to save them—to save them all. This is tried by an intercessory prayer, chap. lxiii. 7-lxiv, in which the most hopeless aspects of the

people's case are stated, the speaker identifies himself with their sin, and yet pleads by the ancient mercies of God that *we all* may be saved. An answer is given in chap. lxv, in which God sharply divides Israel into two classes, the faithful and the idolaters, and affirms that, while the nation shall be saved for the sake of the faithful remnant, both classes can never share the same experience or the same fate. And the book closes with a discourse in chap. lxvi, in which this division between the two classes in Israel is pursued to a last terrible contrast upon the narrow stage of Jerusalem herself. We are left, not with hope for the salvation of all the nation, but with a last judgement separating its godly and ungodly portions.

Thus there are three connected divisions in lxiii. 7–lxvi. *First*, the prophet's Intercessory Prayer, chap. lxiii. 7–lxiv ; *second*, an Answer from God, chap. lxv ; and *third*, the Final Discourse and Judgement, chap. lxvi.

## I. THE PRAYER FOR THE WHOLE PEOPLE (chap. lxiii. 7–lxiv)

There has been much discussion on both the date and the authorship of this piece—as to whether it comes from the Exile or after, and as to whether it comes from our chief prophet or from another. It must have been written after the destruction and before the rebuilding of the Temple ; this is put past doubt by these verses : *Our adversaries have trodden down Thy sanctuary. Thy holy cities are become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. The house of our holiness and of our ornament, wherein our fathers praised Thee, is become a burning of fire, and all our delights are ruin.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ch. lxiii. 18 and lxiv. 10, 11. In the Hebrew ch. lxiv begins a verse later than it does in the English version.

This language has been held to imply that the disaster to Jerusalem was recent, as if the city's conflagration still flared on the national imagination, which in later years of the Exile was impressed rather by the long, cold ruins of the Holy Place, the haunt of beasts. Not only is this in itself inconclusive, but any impression it leaves is entirely dispelled by other verses, which speak of the Divine anger as having been of long continuance, and as if it had only hardened the people in sin; compare lxiii. 17 and lxiv. 6, 7. Nothing in the prayer shows that the author lived in exile, and accordingly the proposal has been made to date the piece from among the first attempts at rebuilding after the Return. To the present expositor this appears uncertain. The man who wrote vv. 11-15 of chap. lxiii seems to have the Return still before him; he would hardly have written as he has done of the Exodus from Egypt unless he had been feeling the need of another exhibition of Divine Power of the same kind. The prayer, therefore, must come from pretty much the same date as chaps. xl-lv—after the Exile had long continued, but while the Return had not yet taken place. Nor is there final reason against attributing it to the same writer. It is true the style differs from the rest of his work, but this may be accounted for, as in the case of chap. liii, by the change of subject and mood. Although Israel's salvation and return are certain, as has been seen and proclaimed, the people are not ready. They are unclean and rotten, withered leaves, the sport of the wind. But the prophet identifies himself with them. In echoes of chap. liii he speaks of their sin as *ours*, of their misery as *ours*. He takes the saddest view of them, sheer dead weight, *none calls on Thy Name, none bestirs himself*. But the prophet thus loads himself with them in order to win if he can

their redemption as a whole. Twice he says in the name of all, *Doubtless Thou art our Father*. His great heart will not have any left out: *we all are the work of Thy hand, we are Thy folk, we all*. And thus upon another of those swift changes from Prophet to Servant and Servant to Prophet, which we have seen in chaps. xl-lv, the prophet takes on himself the work he there assigned to the Servant, and fulfils the loftiest ideal of Service, not only to be the critic and judge of his people, but to make himself one with them in their sorrow and sin, and to carry their guilt as his own. Truly, as his last words on the Servant said, he here *bears the sin of many and interposes for the transgressors*. We feel, therefore, the strongest reasons in the thought, temper, and terms of this intercessory prayer, as well as in its allusions to the Exodus and to the desecration and burning of the Temple, for dating it before the Return from Exile and even assigning to it to 'Second Isaiah' himself; and we see no particle of evidence for a later date. This conclusion was formed by me in 1890, and I welcome the fact that Budde's is substantially the same.<sup>1</sup> Skinner holds an exilic date as at least possible. But most recent critics bring down the date to after 538, assuming later assaults on the rebuilt Temple, which contradict each other and for none of which—save one—is there historical evidence.<sup>2</sup>

The Prayer opens with a recital of God's ancient mercies to Israel, which gives it connection with the

<sup>1</sup> In Kautzsch's *Die Heilige Schrift des A.T.* (3rd ed., 1909), p. 662.

<sup>2</sup> Gressmann and Littmann (favoured by Whitehouse) to between 538 and 520; Sellin to 515-500, after an assumed devastation of Zerubbabel's Temple; Duhm, after an assumed devastation by Samaritans, shortly before Nehemiah came; Cheyne, after an assumed destruction by Artaxerxes Ochus, 363-345; while Marti takes lxiii. 15 ff., lxiv. 10-12, as after a profanation in the Maccabean times. Of this last, and this only, is there historical evidence.

preceding sections of the Book. In lxii. 6, 7 the speaker urged *the remembrancers of Yahweh to keep no silence and allow Him no silence till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.* This remembrancing the prophet himself takes up in lxiii. 7-14. The metre is again that of the *Kinah*, and fairly regular, if we transpose the lines of two of the couplets, in vv. 7, 14. This will render needless the deletion of some words and the supposition of gaps.

- lxiii. 7. *The mercies sure of Yahweh I tell,  
The triumphs of Yahweh,  
According to all that Yahweh did grant us,  
Of His pities did grant us ;<sup>1</sup>  
The wealth <sup>2</sup> of the goodness to Israel's House,  
The wealth of His mercies.*
8. *For, Surely, He said, My people are they,  
Sons that deceive not !  
And so He became their Saviour*
9. *From <sup>3</sup> all their affliction.  
No <sup>4</sup> messenger <sup>5</sup> was it or angel,  
But His Presence <sup>6</sup> that saved them.  
In His love and His sparing grace  
Himself did redeem them.  
And He lifted them up and bare them  
All the days of old.*
10. *But they, they rebelled and they grieved  
His Holy Spirit ;  
So He turned Him to be their foe,  
Himself fought against them.*

<sup>1</sup> So LXX, Vulg. ; Heb *them*.

<sup>2</sup> So Budde and others, after LXX. This line and the one now before it I have transposed.

<sup>3</sup> So LXX, Heb. *in*.

<sup>4</sup> So Heb. text, LXX, Vulg. : Heb. margin *to him*.

<sup>5</sup> So LXX, Vulg. A.V., following Heb. margin *to him*, reads *was afflicted* = *He was afflicted*.

<sup>6</sup> Lit. *His Face*.

11. *Then they*<sup>1</sup> *remembered the days of old,*  
*Of Moses His Servant :*<sup>2</sup>  
*Oh, where is He Who brought up from the sea*<sup>3</sup>  
*The shepherd of His flock ?*  
*Oh, where is He Who set in their midst*  
*His Holy Spirit ?*
12. *He who made march upon Moses' right*  
*His glorious arm ?*  
*Who sundered the waters before them*  
*To make Him a name for ever.*
13. *Leading them on through the deeps*  
*Like horse on the prairie,*
14. *Like cattle descending the vale*  
*They do not stumble,*<sup>4</sup>  
*The Spirit of Yahweh guiding them on.*<sup>5</sup>  
*Thus Thou leddest Thy people*  
*To make Thee a glorious name.*

The measure changes to lines approximately equal yet more or less irregular. If we feel the passion that breaks them we can dispense with most of the proposed emendations of the text ; which, however, is sometimes uncertain.

15. *Look out of Heaven and see*  
*From Thy height, the holy and beauteous.*  
*Ah, where be Thy zeal and Thy might,*  
*The surge of Thy yearning ?*<sup>6</sup>  
*Thy pity for me holds itself back,*<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Heb. has the singular, but meaning *the people*.

<sup>2</sup> So Heb. MSS, LXX, Vulg., Targ.

<sup>3</sup> Budde *waters*, i.e., of Nile.

<sup>4</sup> With Kittel, I transpose the lines of this couplet.

<sup>5</sup> So ancient versions and most moderns ; Heb. *giving them rest*.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. *bowels*.

<sup>7</sup> Or, as LXX suggests, *Hold not Thy pity back*.



lxiii. 16. *Yet Thou art our Father !*

*Though Abraham knows us not,  
Nor Israel will own us,  
O Yahweh Thou art our Father,  
Thy Name Our-Redeemer-of-Old.*

17. *Why make us err from Thy ways, O Yahweh,  
And harden our hearts from Thy Fear ?  
Turn Thou again for Thy servants' sakes,  
For the sake <sup>1</sup> of the tribes of Thy heritage.*

18. *Why do the wicked belittle Thy holiness (?) <sup>2</sup>  
Our enemies trample Thy sanctuary ?*

19. *Long are we like them Thou hast not ruled,  
Who have never been called by Thy Name.*

lxiv. 1. *Oh that Thou Heaven would'st rend, come down,  
The mountains quake <sup>3</sup> at Thy Presence—*

2. *As fire's enkindling of brushwood,  
As fire stirs water to boil <sup>4</sup>—  
To make Thy Name known to Thy foes,  
Till the nations tremble before Thee.*

3. *While Thou doest horrors we were not expecting, <sup>5</sup>*

4. *Nor have heard from of old.*

*Ear hath not heard, nor eye seen a God save Thee  
Who doeth deeds for those who await Him. <sup>6</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> So LXX.

<sup>2</sup> This line is uncertain—Heb. *for a little Thy holy people possessed ; LXX, we possessed the hill of Thy holy one ;* similarly Cheyne. By differently arranging the consonants Buhl, Marti, Whitehouse, Box, Moffatt read as above ; Budde agrees, but reads *enkindle* for *belittle*.

<sup>3</sup> Some read *streaming*.

<sup>4</sup> Feeling the weakness of the figures, some read with LXX *as wax that melts, as water devours the fire*.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. adds *Thou camest down, the mountains before Thee quake*, an obvious gloss, interrupting the parallel of the couplet into which it has intruded.

<sup>6</sup> The text of ver. 3 is quite uncertain, and all emendations of it conjectural. The above is suggested by LXX (which, in the first line, has *we have heard* for Heb. *they have heard*) and 1 Cor. ii. 9 (*ear hath not heard*).

If possible the passion runs deeper through the rest of the prayer, though somewhat more quietly and less broken. Very notable are the echoes of rhythms in chap. liii, the emphatic endings to so many lines on the musical *küllānū*, *we all*.

5. *If but*<sup>1</sup> *Thou would'st meet those who do right,*<sup>2</sup>  
*Who are keeping in mind Thy Ways !*<sup>3</sup>  
*Lo, Thou wast wroth for we had sinned,*  
*By our faithlessness fallen away, (?)*<sup>3</sup>
6. *Till as one unclean*<sup>4</sup> *were we all,*  
*As a filthy cloth the whole of our righteousness.*  
*We withered like leaves—we all,*  
*And our guilt like the wind swept us off.*
7. *Not one there is who calls on Thy Name,*  
*Who bestirs himself to lay hold on Thee.*  
*For Thou hast hidden Thy Presence from us,*  
*And delivered us*<sup>5</sup> *into the hand of our sins.*
8. *But now, O Yahweh, our Father art Thou,*  
*We are the clay and Thou our Potter,*  
*Yea, the work of Thy Hand are we all.*
9. *Be not utterly wroth, O Yahweh,*  
*And remember not guilt for ever !*  
*Behold, look now, for*<sup>6</sup> *Thy folk are we all.*
10. *Thy holy cities*<sup>7</sup> *are become a desert,*  
*Jerusalem desolation.*

<sup>1</sup> *L2* by repeating the last two letters of the previous line : so most moderns since Grätz and Ewald.

<sup>2</sup> So LXX and Vulg.

<sup>3</sup> The Heb. text is unintelligible. Since Lowth most moderns render more or less as above, reading (by the help of LXX) *במעללינו*, *at our deeds*, or *במעלנו* *at or by our faithlessness* (as above), and *ונפשע*, *and we had fallen away*, or (with Cheyne) *ונרשע* *were guilty*. Budde retains the *מעולם* of the text.

<sup>4</sup> Ritually unclean.

<sup>5</sup> So LXX, Vulg., Targ.

<sup>6</sup> LXX.

<sup>7</sup> LXX *city*, and so many moderns. But these were Levitical *cities*. Heb. adds *Sion hath become a desert*, probably a gloss.

lxiv. II. *Our holy and beautiful house  
Wherein our fathers did praise thee  
Is become a blazing fire,  
And all our desirable places ruin.*

12. *At these can'st restrain Thyself, O Yahweh,  
Keep silent and let us be utterly crushed ?*

Two points stand out from the rest: The Divine Trust, from which all God's dealings with His people are said to have started, and the Divine Fatherhood.

*He said, Surely they are My people, children that will not deal falsely, so He became their Saviour.* The surely is not the fiat of sovereignty or foreknowledge, but hope and confidence of love. It did not prevail; it was disappointed.

This is, of course, an acknowledgement of man's free will. It implies that men's conduct must remain unsure, and that in calling men God cannot adventure upon greater certainty than flows from the trust of affection. If one asks, What, then, about God's foreknowledge, Who alone knoweth the end of a thing from the beginning, and His sovereign grace, Who chooseth whom He will? It can only be asked in return, Is it not better to be without logic for a little, if by its absence we obtain so true, so deep a glimpse into God's heart as this simple verse affords? Which is better to know—that God is Wisdom which knows all, or Love that ventures all? Surely, that God is Love which ventures all with the worst, and most hopeless of us. That is what makes this single verse of Scripture more powerful to move the heart than all creeds and catechisms. For where these speak of sovereign will, and beat down our affections with the heavy (if legitimate) sceptre they sway, this calls forth

our love, honour, and obedience by the heart it reveals in God. Of what unsuspecting trust, what chivalrous adventure of love, what fatherly confidence, does it speak ! What a religion is this, in the power of which a man may every morning rise and feel himself thrilled by the thought that God trusts him enough to work with His will for the day ; in the power of which a man may look round and see the sordid life about him glorified by the truth, that for the salvation of such God did venture Himself in a love which laid itself down in death. The attraction and power of such a religion can never die. Requiring no painful thought to argue it into reality, it leaps upon the natural affection of man's heart ; it takes his instincts captive ; it gives him a conscience, a sense of honour, an obligation. No wonder that this prophet, having such a belief, should identify himself with the people, and take upon him the weight of their sin before God.

The other point of the prayer is the Fatherhood of God, concerning which all that is needful to say here is that the prophet, true to the rest of Old Testament teaching, applies it only to God's relation to the nation as a whole. In the Old Testament no one is called the son of God except Israel as a people, or some individual representative and head of Israel. And even of such the term was seldom employed. This was not because the Hebrew was without temptation to imagine his physical descent from the gods, for neighbouring nations indulged in such dreams for themselves and their heroes ; nor because he was without appreciation of the intellectual kinship between the human and the Divine, for he knew that in the beginning God had said, *Let us make man in our own image*. But the same feeling prevailed with him in regard to this idea, as we have seen prevailed in regard

to the kindred idea of God as the husband of His people.<sup>1</sup> The prophets would emphasise that it was a moral relation,—a moral relation, initiated from God's side by certain historical acts of His free, selecting, redeeming and adopting love. Israel was not God's son till God had evidently called and redeemed him. Look at how our prophet uses the word Father, and to what he makes it equivalent. The first time it is equivalent to Redeemer: *Thou, O Yahweh, art our Father; our Redeemer from of old is Thy name* (lxiii. 16b). The second time it is illustrated by the work of the potter: *But now, O Yahweh, Thou art our Father; we are the clay, and Thou our potter; and we are all the work of Thy hand* (lxiv. 8). This is no physical nor intellectual relation. The assurance and the virtue of it do not come to men with their blood or the birth of their intellect, but in the course of moral experience, with the sense that God claims them from sin and from the world for Himself; with the gift of a calling and a destiny; with the formation of character, the perfecting of obedience, the growth in His knowledge and His grace. And because it is a moral relation time is needed to realise it, and only after patience and effort may it be unhesitatingly claimed. That is why Israel was so long in claiming it, and why the clearest, most undoubting cries to God the Father, which rise from the Greek in the earliest period of his history, reach our ears from Jewish lips only near the end of their long progress, only (as we see from our prayer) in a time of trial and affliction.

We have a New Testament echo of this Old Testament belief in the Fatherhood of God, as a moral and not a natural relation, in Paul's writings, who in the

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 421-424.



Second Epistle to the Corinthians (vi. 17, 18) urges thus: *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters saith the Lord Almighty.*

## II. ANSWERS FROM GOD (chap. lxxv)

Questions of the date and authorship of this chapter are more difficult than about those of the preceding, and answers to them may not be possible. Is chap. lxxv an answer to the prayer lxxiii. 7–lxxiv, which we have seen to be exilic? As such, it was clearly regarded by the editor of the Book of Isaiah; and with most expositors of the time I defended, in 1890, its exilic origin, both because of its train of thought and because of the circumstance it reflects. Since then critics with few exceptions<sup>1</sup> assign it to a post-exilic date and most of them to the time of the Samaritan troubles. This is far from certain, and is, indeed, contradicted by some details of the passage. Israel's land is described as *My Mountains* (ver. 9), a name natural for exiles on the flats of Mesopotamia to use,<sup>2</sup> and its re-occupation by Israel seems still future. The charge of forgetting *My holy mountain* (lxv) is more applicable to those at distance from it than to those once more settled about it. *Sacrificing in gardens or groves and burning incense on tiles or roofs* (3) were practised in Jerusalem before the Exile, the latter having been introduced from Babylonia. The occult rites (4) not charged elsewhere against Jews were as possible in

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Budde, who dates it between 586 and 538 but with a query.

<sup>2</sup> So Ezekiel in xxxviii. 21, and frequently elsewhere *the mountains* or *Israel's mountains*.



Babylonia<sup>1</sup> as in Palestine ; while Cheyne admits that the charge of worshipping Gad and Meni, Luck and Destiny,<sup>2</sup> 'suits Babylonia as well as (probably) Palestine.' The question is complicated by the ambiguity of some of the tenses used. Are they pasts or presents, referring to the time of Manasseh or to that of the writer ?<sup>3</sup> The sharp distinction between the true and the false in Israel may point to the time of the Jewish troubles with the Samaritans. On the whole the question is open, though I still incline to a date during the exile.

The unity of the chapter is also in question, but the changes of metre cannot be taken as conclusive against it. Verses 1-7, in irregularly long lines, vindicate the Divine readiness to be inquired of, and expose the unwillingness of the people to listen, and the idolatry of some of them.

lxv. 1. *I was there for enquiry by those who never asked  
Me,*<sup>4</sup>

*I was there to be found by those who did not seek  
Me.*

*I said, Here am I, Here am I,  
To a nation that invoked not My Name.*

2. *All the day long I spread out My hands  
To a stubborn and mutinous<sup>5</sup> people,  
Who go on in a way not good  
After conceits of their own :*

<sup>1</sup> See Dillmann *in loco* about their being actual there.

<sup>2</sup> The planets Jupiter and Venus, the 'Larger and Lesser Luck,' were worshipped in Babylon as Marduk and Istar. It may be these deities who are here called Gad and Meni (cf. Arab. al-manniyât, 'fate,' Wellhausen, *Skizzen*, iii. 22 ff., 189). For idolatrous feasts, see Sayce's Hibbert Lectures, 539 ; cf. 1 Corinthians x. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Bredenkamp, indeed, takes the writer for Isaiah himself under Manasseh !

<sup>4</sup> So LXX ; Heb. omits *Me*.

<sup>5</sup> LXX and Vulg. ; Heb. omits *mutinous*.

3. *A people that stir My resentment  
To My face without ceasing ;  
Doing sacrifice among the gardens,<sup>1</sup>  
Burning incense on the tiles ; <sup>2</sup>*
4. *Who sit them down on the graves  
And pass the night in secluded places ;  
Who eat of the flesh of swine  
With garbage broth in their vessels ;*
5. *They who say, Keep to thyself,  
Near me not lest I behallow <sup>3</sup> thee !  
Such things are a smoke in My nostrils,  
An ever smouldering fire—*
6. *Behold it is written before Me !  
I will not be silent until I requite,  
Yea into their bosom requite*
7. *Their <sup>4</sup> guilts and the guilts of their <sup>4</sup> fathers  
Together, saith Yahweh :  
They who burn incense on mountains,  
On the heights have blasphemed Me.  
First I will measure what they have earned  
Then into their bosom requite it.<sup>5</sup>*

The traitors being thus disposed of, the Divine answer turns to the fortunes of the faithful remnant. The same irregular metre continues :—

8. *Thus sayeth Yahweh :  
As when the new wine is found in the cluster,  
And Do not destroy it they say,*

<sup>1</sup> Or *groves*.

<sup>2</sup> Either on housetops or on altars : but Marti suggests, by a change of vowels, *under the poplars*.

<sup>3</sup> Lit. *sanctify* ; but in an original sense of the verb *separate*, *make taboo*.

<sup>4</sup> So both ancient versions and most moderns ; Heb. *your*.

<sup>5</sup> A verb and object are here required, but Heb. does not give them.

*For a blessing is in it !<sup>1</sup>*

*So will I do for the sake of My servants,  
That the whole I may not destroy.*

- lxv. 9. *A seed will I lead out of Jacob,  
And from Judah an heir to My hills ;  
My chosen they shall inherit it,<sup>2</sup>  
And there shall My servants dwell.*
10. *Sharon shall become a mead of flocks  
And the Vale of Achor a couch for cattle—  
For My people who seek unto Me !*
11. *But ye forsakers of Yahweh,  
Who forget My holy hill,  
Who set out a table for Luck,  
And fill up mixed wine for Destiny,<sup>3</sup>*
12. *I destine yourselves to the sword,  
And you all shall bend down to the slaughter,  
For that I called and ye answered not,  
I spake and ye did not listen,  
But have done what was ill in Mine eyes,  
And chosen that which displeased Me.*

The metre now breaks—whether by the same or by another hand—into the *Kinah* once more (more or less regularly), and so continues till at least ver. 16, and apparently to 20.

<sup>1</sup> This simile, obvious in its general, is vague in its exact, meaning. Why should there be need to forbid the destruction of a cluster in which the new wine, or grapes, were detected as beginning to appear, unless unpromising features were also present in the cluster? The latter must be implied, but is not clear. One is almost tempted to suppose that the LXX ρωξ, which is given for *the new wine*, is used in its deleterious sense. The song *Do not destroy it* is probably the same as is found in the titles of Pss. lvii–lix and lxxv (see W. R. Smith, *O.T. in the Jewish Church*, 209).

<sup>2</sup> So Heb., apparently meaning *the land*; Budde reads *them*, i.e., *the hills*.

<sup>3</sup> *Luck, Destiny*, see note on p. 498.

13. *Therefore thus sayeth  
Yahweh the Lord :  
Behold, My servants shall eat  
But ye shall hunger !  
Behold, My servants shall drink  
But ye shall thirst !  
Behold, My servants shall be glad  
But ye be shamed.*
14. *Behold, My servants shall sing  
From joy of heart !  
But ye shall shriek out of anguish of heart  
And howl for breaking of spirit.*
15. *Your name shall ye leave for a curse to My  
chosen,<sup>1</sup>  
But My servants be called a new <sup>2</sup> name.*
16. *Who blesses himself in the land shall bless him  
By the God of Truth,<sup>3</sup>  
And who swears in the land shall swear  
By the God of Truth.<sup>3</sup>  
Forgotten shall be the former troubles  
And hid from Mine eyes.*
17. *For behold, I create new heavens  
And a new earth,  
And the former things shall not be remembered  
Nor come up to mind.*
18. *But they <sup>4</sup> shall rejoice and joy for ever  
Over what I create.  
For lo, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing  
And her people gladness,*

<sup>1</sup> Heb. adds *and may the Lord Yahweh kill thee*, which seems (as it disturbs the metre) a later addition defining the curse.

<sup>2</sup> So LXX; Heb. *another*.

<sup>3</sup> So, by a change of vowels, most moderns; Heb. *God of Amen*; LXX *the true God*.

<sup>4</sup> So Syr. and Targ.; Heb. uses the imperative.

- lxv. 19. *And I will exult in Jerusalem  
And joy in My people,<sup>1</sup>  
No more shall be heard in her sound of weeping  
Or sound of crying.*
20. *No more shall there be from thence  
A suckling of days,  
Or an old man who has not filled up  
The days of his life.  
For the youngest shall die a hundred years old  
Who fails of the hundred is cursed (?)<sup>2</sup>*

The metre again changes to longer equal lines, but whether because another hand comes in here it is impossible to say.

21. *They shall build houses to dwell in themselves,  
And plant out vineyards and eat their fruit.*
22. *They shall not build and others inhabit,  
They shall not plant for others to eat.  
But as the days of the trees so the days of My  
people,  
The works of their hands My chosen shall use  
to the full.*
23. *They shall not labour for nothing,  
They shall not bring forth to destruction.  
For a seed blessed of Yahweh are they  
And their offspring with them.*
24. *It shall be ere they call I will answer,  
While they still speak I will hear.*

<sup>1</sup> Some take this couplet as a later insertion; it interrupts those preceding and following.

<sup>2</sup> This line is quite uncertain; LXX *and the sinner who dies at a hundred is cursed*. But Heb. *the sinner* (a participle) may be taken as above in its primitive sense of *missing* a mark, *failing*.

25. *The wolf and the lamb shall feed together  
And the lion eat straw like the ox.<sup>1</sup>  
They shall not do harm nor destroy  
In all My Holy Mount, saith Yahweh.*

### III. FINAL JUDGEMENTS (chap. lxvi)

Whether with this chapter we are at last in Palestine is fairly disputable. As the chapter is no unity but a series of loosely connected passages the question of date must be put to each of these in turn.

1. The date of the first two verses depends on the width of meaning we allow them. If we feel able to limit the comprehensive terms of ver. 1 to a condemnation only of a house for Yahweh other than that on Sion and to understand by the phrase *all these*, in ver. 2, buildings already in process or completed on Sion, then we may assign both verses, as most moderns do,<sup>2</sup> to the troubles in Jerusalem before or upon the coming of Nehemiah (c. 445) and the Samaritan projects of a rival Temple. But this is unduly and unjustly to limit the very general character of the terms used in ver. 1; while the phrase *has not My hand made all these* is even more applicable to *the heaven and earth* just mentioned than it can possibly be supposed to be to the authorised Temple on Sion. The verses surely imply that *no* house is indispensable to God or his true worshippers. This opinion, held by Ewald and Driver, and since strongly supported by Budde,<sup>3</sup> was expressed

<sup>1</sup> Heb. adds *But the serpent its food shall be dust*, probably a later addition irrelevant to the sense and disturbing the metre.

<sup>2</sup> Of older critics Bleek, Vatke, and Kuenen had taken the whole chapter as post-exilic; and since Duhm's strong advocacy most moderns take vv. 1 and 2 as a condemnation only of the Samaritan Temple: Cheyne, Skinner, Marti, Box, Whitehouse.

<sup>3</sup> *Gesch. der alt-hebr. Litt* (1906), 182; Kautzsch's *Heil. Schrift des A.T.* (3rd ed., 1909), 688.



in the first edition of this volume, and I still think it the natural interpretation of the verses. After the bold attitude of Jeremiah towards the Temple, it is perfectly possible to conceive of such a statement as this being made by a prophet of the Exile. But who he was is another question, perhaps unanswerable by us. Here are the verses, in long irregular lines like many we have seen.

- lxvi. 1. *Thus saith Yahweh : Heaven is My Throne  
And earth the stool of My feet.  
What is this for a house ye will build Me,  
And this for a place of My dwelling ?*  
2. *Hath not My hand fashioned all these,  
And all these are Mine ?*<sup>1</sup>—*Rede of Yahweh.  
But to what will I look ?*<sup>2</sup> *To the humble  
And contrite in spirit, who trembles at My Word.*

Of those who would limit such verses to a condemnation of a rival Temple it may confidently be asked, Would the prophet have brought in *Heaven and Earth* except in antithesis to *all* structures by men ? Would he have contrasted the worship that is from the spirit save with trust in all or any material structures ? At least we can say whether the Temple is still to be built or already being built, the prophet is rebuking those of his generation who put a formal or materialistic confidence in it, just as his predecessors had rebuked their fathers for the same. In his appeal to this text, Stephen was justified not only by its terms but by its spirit as well.<sup>3</sup>

2. The next verse is admittedly more difficult. Here

<sup>1</sup> So LXX, or *all these are for Me*; Heb. *all these came to be*.

<sup>2</sup> So LXX; Heb. *and to such will I look*.

<sup>3</sup> Acts vii. 49.

are its lines literally translated, save that what are participles in the Hebrew are rendered by *who* with the present tense of the same verbs, and in the third line *who pours out* is added as necessary both to the rhythm and the sense.

3. *Who slaughters an ox—who slays a man ;  
Who sacrifices a sheep—who breaks the neck of a  
dog.*<sup>1</sup>  
*Who brings up an oblation—who pours out  
swine's blood ;*<sup>1</sup>  
*Who offers memorials with incense—who blesses  
an idol.*

Thus four legal sacrifices are either equated with, or presented as practised along with, unlawful, heathenish sacrifices. For the former interpretation might be pled the close association of the lines with those that precede them—legal sacrifices are equal to unlawful ones, that is of no worth at all, a view more bluntly expressed than similar views on sacrifice by Amos and Jeremiah ;<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah's being likewise associated with a depreciation of the Temple-buildings. But this is doubtful. It is perhaps less forced to take these lines to mean that those who rendered the legal sacrifices also committed the crime of murder, and practised heathenish forms of worship, that like those whom Paul condemns they *partook of the table of the Lord and of the table of devils* ;<sup>3</sup> and this interpretation is supported by the connection of these lines with the following :—

<sup>1</sup> On the sacramental use of swine and dogs, see W. R. Smith, *Religion of Semites*, 272 ff., 325.

<sup>2</sup> Amos v. 22, 25 ; Jer. vi. 20 ; vii. 21 ; xi. 15 ; xiv. 12.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. x. 21.

- 3b. *As those have chosen ways of their own,  
And their soul delights in their horrors,*
4. *So shall I choose for them troubles as wanton,  
And the things that they dread I shall bring  
them.  
Because I have called and none was who  
answered,  
I have spoken and they never hearkened.  
But they did what was ill in Mine eyes  
And what I desired not they chose.*

3. The next verse (5), in rhythm so uncertain that some read it as prose, brings comfort to the loyal in Israel through the discomfiture of their scoffing brethren. These, it must be admitted, are most naturally understood as the hybrid Jews who, with the Samaritans, jeered at the rebuilding of the City about 450. If so, we are at last in Palestine. Verse 6 of a more regular metre logically follows, proclaiming the achievement of the sinners' ruin. There is no need to consider this 'eschatological'; it is conceived as immediate. Yahweh is paying out His enemies. So calls a voice from the Temple which, therefore, has been rebuilt—unless we have here, not impossibly, a quotation from an earlier, pre-exilic prophecy. So uncertain are questions of date in chapters so composite as this!

5. *Hear ye the Word of Yahweh,  
Ye tremblers at His Word!  
Your brethren have said, who hate you,  
Who thrust you forth for My Name's sake,  
'Let Yahweh shew Himself<sup>1</sup> glorious,  
So that we may gaze on your joy!'  
But put to shame shall they be.*

<sup>1</sup> So LXX.

6. *Hark, a roar from the City !  
       Hark, from the Temple !  
       Hark, Yahweh is paying in full  
       Their deserts to His foes !*

4. The Kinah metre of ver. 6 continues throughout 7-16, which has led some to take it as part of the same poem with them, and not as belonging to ver. 5. Who knows? Verses 7-16 form a logical, as well as a metrical whole, dealing with the sudden re-population of the City and Land. We are, therefore, once more back from the Samaritan times, either in the eve of the exile (like chaps. lx-lxii), or just after the Return. As we have seen before, that the Kinah is sometimes irregular does not make emendations necessary.

7. *Or ever she began to travail  
       She brought to the birth,  
       Or ever a pang was coming towards her  
       She was delivered of a man.*

8. *Who ever has heard the like  
       Or seen such things ?  
       Can a land be put to travail  
       In a single day ?  
       Or a nation be brought to the birth  
       At one stroke ?  
       Yet as soon as she travailed she bare—  
       Sion her sons.*

9. *Shall I bring to the breaking<sup>1</sup> and not to the  
       birth ?—  
       Yahweh doth say—  
       Or I, the Causer of birth, shut the womb ?—<sup>2</sup>  
       Sayeth thy God.*

<sup>1</sup> For this figure, see ch. xxxvii. 33

<sup>2</sup> Heb. has simply *shut*.

- lxvi. 10. *Rejoice with*<sup>1</sup> *Jerusalem, exult in her,*  
*All ye who love her !*  
*Be ye glad with her in her gladness*  
*All who did mourn her !*
11. *That ye may suck and be sated*  
*From the breast of her comforts,*  
*That ye may milk and enjoy to the full*  
*From her bosom's abundance.*<sup>2</sup>
12. *For thus sayeth Yahweh :*  
*Lo, I turn the tide towards her,*  
*Peace like a river,*  
*And as a surging stream*  
*The wealth of nations.*  
*Your sucklings*<sup>3</sup> *shall be borne on the hip,*<sup>4</sup>  
*On the knees be dandled.*
13. *As a man whom his mother comforts*  
*So will I comfort you.*<sup>5</sup>
14. *Ye shall see and your heart rejoice,*  
*Your bones like grass shall flourish.*  
*Yahweh's hand*<sup>6</sup> *shall be known on His servants.*  
*But wrath to His foes.*
15. *For lo, Yahweh cometh like fire,*<sup>7</sup>  
*Like the whirlwind His chariots,*  
*To render His anger with fury*  
*His rebuke with a blaze of fire.*
16. *For by fire Yahweh tries the whole earth*<sup>8</sup>  
*All flesh by His sword,*  
*And many are Yahweh's slain.*<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Some with LXX read *rejoice thou*.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *bosom* or *wealth* (the meaning is uncertain) of *her abundance*.

<sup>3</sup> After the LXX; Heb. *and ye shall suck*.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. *side*; see lx. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. adds *and in Jerusalem shall ye be comforted*, probably a later addition, superfluous both to the metre and the meaning.

<sup>6</sup> Some read *kindness*, but for this there is no warrant nor need.

<sup>7</sup> So LXX; Heb. *in*.

<sup>8</sup> So LXX; Heb. omits the whole earth.

<sup>9</sup> This line is perhaps another late addition.

5. Some lines follow, vv. 17-18a, which might plausibly be taken as having dropped from their proper place after vv. 3 or 5; yet in so composite a chapter they have been more probably gleaned from elsewhere.

17. *Who hallow and cleanse them for the gardens  
After one in the middle,  
Who eat the flesh of the swine,  
Of vermin<sup>1</sup> and the mouse,  
Together shall perish—'tis Yahweh's Rede—*  
18. *I know<sup>2</sup> their works and conceits.*

*For the gardens* instead of *for My sanctuary!* *After one in the middle* is a literal translation and intelligible if *one* be taken as the leader of rites, whose tones and gestures the other communicants imitate.<sup>3</sup> The Hebrew Margin reads *one* as feminine, perhaps in reference to the image of a goddess round which the ritual was practised. By the change of two consonants some read *one the other on the tip of the ear*, that is consecrate each other by a touch of the victim's blood.<sup>4</sup>

6. A passage follows, vv. 18b-24, out of which it is possible, as some have shown,<sup>5</sup> to extricate ten or so metrical couplets. But the deletions required for this are on so improbable a scale that the text may well be left in its present prose form.<sup>6</sup>

18b. *I am<sup>7</sup> coming to gather all the nations and the tongues and they shall come and see My glory.* 19. *And I will set among them a sign—a marvellous act of*

<sup>1</sup> Reading *creeping things*; Heb. *abomination*.

<sup>2</sup> So LXX; Heb. omits *know*.

<sup>3</sup> Ezek. viii. 11; Baudissin, *Studien zur Semitischen Religionsgeschichte*, i. 315, etc.

<sup>4</sup> So Cheyne and Budde after Klostermann; cf. Exod. xxix. 20; Lev. viii. 23 f.; xiv. 14, 17, 25, 28.

<sup>5</sup> Duhm and Marti.

<sup>6</sup> So Cheyne (*S.B.O.T.*) and Budde.

<sup>7</sup> So LXX.



judgement for survivors are immediately mentioned—and *I will send the survivors of them to the nations, Tarshish, Put and Lud, Meshekh and Rosh, Tubal and Yavan,*<sup>1</sup> *the isles or coasts far off that have not heard report of Me,*<sup>2</sup> *nor have seen My glory, and they shall recount My glory among the nations.* 20. *And they shall bring all your brethren from among all the nations an oblation to Yahweh, on horses and in chariots, and in litters and on mules and on dromedaries up to My Holy Mount, Jerusalem, saith Yahweh, just as the sons of Israel bring the oblation in a clean vessel to the House of Yahweh.* 21. *And also from them will I take for priests for levites*<sup>3</sup> *saith Yahweh.* 22. *For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I am making shall be standing before Me—Rede of Yahweh—so shall stand your seed and your name.*

But again this wonderful Book swerves from the universal hope to which it has soared and gives instead a division and a judgement; on the one side those of *all flesh* who live in the regular worship of Yahweh (the ideal life of the later Judaism) and on the other, and implicitly as part of that worship (?), the spectacle of the carcasses of the apostates perpetually gnawed and consumed. It is an awful close.

23. *And it shall be from new moon to new moon and from sabbath to sabbath that all flesh shall come to worship before Me saith Yahweh.* 24. *And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men who rebel against*

<sup>1</sup> Tarshish in Spain; Put (as in LXX, not Pul as in Heb.) and Lud occur together in Ezek. xxvii. 10, xxx. 5, Put is Punt, in E. Africa, Lud is a N. African people. Meshekh (so LXX) and Rosh (Heb. with different consonants reads after Jer. xlv. i. 9 *drawers of the bow*) together in Ezek. xxxviii. 2 f. with Tubal: Yavan is Ionia = Greece.

<sup>2</sup> LXX of *My Name*.

<sup>3</sup> So Heb. identifying the two as in Deuteronomy xviii. But if with the LXX and be inserted between *priests* and Levites that gives the different view of the priestly Code regarding them.

*Me ; for their worm shall not die nor their fire be quenched, but they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.*

So we are left by the Book—not with the new heavens and the new earth which it has often promised ; not with the holy mountain on which none shall hurt nor destroy, saith the Lord ; not with a Jerusalem full of glory and a people all holy, the centre of a gathered humanity,—but with the city like to a judgement floor, and a people divided between worship and a horrible woe.

O Jerusalem, City of the Lord, Mother eagerly desired of her children, radiant light to them that sit in darkness, home after exile, haven after storm,—expected as the garner of the Lord, thou art still to be only His threshing-floor, and heaven and hell as of old shall, from new moon to new moon, through the revolving years, lie side by side within thy narrow walls ! For from the day that Araunah the Jebusite threshed out his sheaves upon thy windswept rock, to the day when the Son of Man standing over against thee divided in His last discourse the sheep from the goats, the wise from the foolish, and the loving from the selfish, thou hast been appointed of God for trial, separation, and judgement.

It is a terrible ending to such prophecies as these we have been studying. But is any other possible ? We ask how can this contiguity of heaven and hell be within and around the Lord's own city, after all His yearning and jealousy for her, after His strife and agony with her enemies, after so clear a revelation of Himself, so long a providence, so glorious a deliverance ? Yet, it is plain that nothing else can result, if the men on whose ears the great prophecy had fallen, with its

music and its gospel, and who had been partakers of the Lord's Deliverance, yet continued to prefer their idols, their swine's flesh, their mouse, their broth of abominable things, their sitting on graves, to so evident a God and to so infinite a grace.

So terrible an ending, but the same as upon the same floor Christ set to His teaching,—the gospel net cast wide, yet only to draw in good and bad together upon a beach of judgement; the wedding feast thrown open and men forced to come in, but among them a heart whom grace so great could not awe even to decency; Christ's Gospel preached, His Example evident, and Himself owned as Lord, and nevertheless some whom neither the hearing nor the seeing nor the owning with their lips did lift to unselfishness or stir to pity. Therefore He who had cried, *Come all unto Me*, was compelled to close by saying to many, *Depart*.

A terrible ending, but only too conceivable. For though God is love, man is free—free to turn from that love; free to be as though he had never felt it; free to put from himself the highest, clearest, most urgent grace that God can show. But to do this is the judgement.

*Lord, are there few that be saved?* The Lord did not answer the question but by bidding the questioner take heed to himself: *Strive to enter in at the strait gate*.

Almighty and most merciful God, who hast sent this book to be the revelation of Thy great love to man, and of Thy power and will to save him, grant that our study of it may not have been in vain by the callousness or carelessness of our hearts, but that through its words we may be confirmed in penitence, lifted to hope, made strong for service, and filled with the knowledge of Thyself and of Thy Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

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